PATTERNS

OF

POWER

The Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt

The Complete Study

1250 — 1517 — 1811

Thomas J. Bryan

with Claude/Anthropic

Held as tested, not revealed.

CONTENTS

Preface
PREFACE AND OUTLINE

Landscape
THE PURCHASED AND THE PROCLAIMED

Module 1
THE HEADS ON BAB ZUWEILA

Module 2
TWENTY-FOUR PARTS OF A COUNTRY

Module 3
A ROBE OF HONOUR AND A DIPLOMA

Module 4
TWO BOYS AND ONE BOOK

Module 5
THE ONLY DOOR THE CROWD COULD PUSH

Module 6
THE RIVER PAID FOR THE STEPPE

Module 7
THE MURDERS WERE NOT THE SECRET

Module 8
THE ARRANGEMENT NOBODY ATTACKED

Module 9
A HEARING BUT NEVER A SEAT

Module 10
THE LEFT FLANK AT MARJ DABIQ

Module 11
THE CANALS THEY COULD NOT DREDGE

Module 12
WHAT THE NORMANS TOOK AND THE MAMLUKS REFUSED

PREFACE

PREFACE AND OUTLINE

Front matter · how this study was made, the disciplines it holds itself to, and a map of its fourteen parts

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The collaboration

This is a case study in the *Patterns of Power* series, applying the series' framework to the Mamluk sultanate of Egypt and Syria — from the murder of the last Ayyubid sultan in 1250 to the Ottoman conquest of 1517, and on to the destruction of the caste itself in a Cairo defile in 1811. The framework is a lens for reading how any order of power is founded, dressed and held: the floor of force beneath every order, the robe of doctrine laid over the floor, the settlement that divides the spoils, the cost column in which each subject prices defiance, the default by which a hierarchy coordinates without instruction, and — running through all of it — position-logic, the proposition that rulers in like positions converge on like solutions because a position poses a problem with only a few good answers.

Most studies in this series examine a conquest across a distance: a metropole, a colony, and the seam between them. This one does not, and the difference is the reason it was chosen. The Mamluk sultanate is the series' cleanest case of the *open problem* — the danger every apex faces from the capable men one level down, whose competence it cannot do without and whose competence is precisely what allows them to replace it — and of one radical answer to that problem, pursued further than anywhere else in the corpus. The men who ruled Egypt for two and a half centuries were foreign slaves, bought as boys on the steppe and in the Caucasus expressly because a purchased child has no kin, no tribe, no lineage and no standing on which a claim could ever be built. They were the device. Then they became the apex, kept the machine running exactly as they had found it, and spent the next two hundred and sixty-seven years applying the same device to the same problem, one level up, against themselves.

The study was built the way the series is built, one module at a time. The author brought the framework, the direction, and the judgement of the whole, and held the collaboration to its disciplines; Claude, Anthropic's model, did the research — verifying load-bearing dates, figures and attributions by web search before any module was written — and produced the drafts, applying the framework module by module, each presented and confirmed before the next was begun. The framework's concepts are the series'; the Mamluk application, and the refinements it yielded, are the work of the collaboration.

Its engine is the method of information asymmetry, but the gap this study measures is not the usual one. There is no metropole here to be deceived, no distant public whose belief funds the enterprise, no dispatch that says one thing in a capital and another in a colony. What this study sets side by side instead is a device and its bill: the exact terms on which an order solved its central problem, and the exact form in which the solution presented its cost, often generations later and in a currency nobody at the time connected to the rule that caused it. The arithmetic is laid out; the sum is left to the reader.

The disciplines

Five rules govern every module.

Quotation. Public-domain primary sources are quoted exactly, at the length the argument needs, because in a legal fiction the precise wording *is* the evidence. Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased, briefly, and credited.

No fabrication. No quotation, date, attribution or figure is ever invented or reconstructed from memory. What cannot be verified is dropped or flagged, never guessed; contested figures are given as ranges.

Gravity without partisanship. Suffering is held with gravity, and the study refuses both flattery and demonisation — it names the legal fiction as fiction and explains the order's logic without excusing it. Its recurring watchword is *legibility is not pardon*: to understand how a thing was done is not to forgive its being done.

Contribution. Every module returns a refinement to the framework, stated plainly in its closing section, rather than merely applying the framework to the case.

Held as tested, not revealed. The pattern is treated as something discovered and tested against the evidence, not handed down as doctrine — a lens laid over the record, a tendency and never a law.

One further discipline is specific to this study and is stated here rather than buried. The surviving primary material for Mamluk Egypt is in medieval Arabic, and no module below quotes a word of it that has been verified against an edition. Where a phrase from a chronicler appears, it comes from a modern translation and is credited as such; where it could not be sourced to a translation reproducing the text, it is paraphrased and flagged. Two documents in particular are named repeatedly in the modules as outstanding: the diploma of investiture by which a caliph made a purchased slave a lawful Islamic sovereign, which is the founding legal fiction of the whole order, and the chronicle of Ibn Iyas, the only eyewitness account of the conquest of 1517. Neither has been read. The study is offered as sound in its structure and honest about that gap.

What the Mamluk sultanate added to the framework

Because this case runs the open problem rather than a colonial conquest, it named features of orders that the metropole-and-colony studies obscure. The refinements the study contributed: that a conqueror inherits not only an administration but a *disarmament*, so that a cheap founding is evidence some earlier order did the expensive work and not evidence of consent; that where the conquered order already held its wealth as a revocable claim, the settlement requires *no fiction at all* and will be found in a survey rather than a charter; that a *transit rent* is disciplined by rerouting and not by revolt, so a ruler funded by goods passing through can look secure while the stream that pays him quietly leaves; that formation and surveillance go *where the capture risk runs*, which need not be downward, so that an order recruiting by an unearnable criterion will educate its subjects generously; that an order conceals *what its legitimacy rests on, not what discredits it*, and that where the robe is borrowed the suppression apparatus belongs to the lender; that a legitimating office is worth exactly *what it is powerless*, and the men who most depend on it will destroy it the moment it acts; that abolishing heredity does not solve the succession problem but *distributes* it, since a loyalty attached to a person dies with him; that *coherence and adaptability are bought from the same account*, so a class constituted by a technique cannot adopt a technique that would dissolve the class; that factional residue accumulates *protections but never admission* where the elite boundary is drawn on something no subject can acquire; that a rented floor dissolves with its paymaster only where the paymaster is *external to it*; and that the metabolic note goes unpaid wherever nobody in the order holds a durable, transmissible interest in the ground.

Underneath nearly all of them lies a single decision, which the study takes as the order's signature: the conversion of every position in the hierarchy from a *thing* into a *claim*. That bought the alignment, the mobility, the discipline and the immunity from dynastic capture. It also produced the periodic dispossession, the inability to re-tool, the silted canals and the permanent closure. Claims-not-things is the Mamluk order in a phrase, and almost every finding here is either its dividend or its bill.

The arc

A landscape opening and twelve modules, each with a framework function and its own evocative title.

Landscape — the order on the eve of the usurpation. **The Purchased and the Proclaimed.** Four centuries of position-logic: how an Islamic hierarchy came to buy its soldiers because it could not trust the men beside it, watched the device fail catastrophically at Samarra, went on using it anyway, and built around it a machine for converting force into lawful sovereignty — the machine the Mamluks seized in 1250 and declined to break.

1 — The Floor of Force. **The Heads on Bab Zuweila.** Mansura to Ayn Jalut: a purchased regiment that founded its own state by being the only army that stopped the Mongols, in a country with one valley and one gate — and a founding that required no conquest because the population had been disarmed centuries before.

2 — The Settlement. **Twenty-Four Parts of a Country.** Cultivated Egypt divided into twenty-fourths and assigned by rank; a ruling caste that refused heritable land to itself in order to stay a caste, and the sacred endowment through which it smuggled inheritance back in anyway.

3 — The Robe. **A Robe of Honour and a Diploma.** A slave caste legitimated entirely by the conquered population's own religion, and the powerless caliph it kept alive in Cairo for two and a half centuries — priceless while he could do nothing, and destroyed the once he tried to act.

4 — Formation. **Two Boys and One Book.** Total formation inside the barracks and generous provision outside it: an order that surveilled its own rulers and educated its subjects, because a boundary made of purchase and foreign birth could not be crossed by learning.

5 — The Cost Column. **The Only Door the Crowd Could Push.** Belief full, exit sealed by the valley and by law, force concentrated at a single gate — and a licensed

minority onto which the grievance that had no legitimate object was repeatedly discharged, with the concession reversed each time.

6 — Extraction. **The River Paid for the Steppe.** The tax on an Egyptian's grain crossing the Mediterranean in Christian ships to buy a boy on the Black Sea; a floor that had to be imported annually; and a state that killed its own transit trade by seizing it.

7 — Information and Suppression. **The Murders Were Not the Secret.** An order that let its assassinations be written down in detail and imprisoned its greatest scholar over a ruling on divorce — the censorship guarding not the regime's conduct but the doctrine its legitimacy rested on, and operated by the men who owned it.

8 — Elite Coordination and the Default. **The Arrangement Nobody Attacked.** Why men who murdered each other for two and a half centuries never once changed what they were fighting over; and the cohort the arrangement dispossessed by design at every succession, which is where every coup came from.

9 — Plurality or Foreclosure. **A Hearing But Never a Seat.** Petition, assembly, inviolable endowment and choice of law, each traced to the factional quarrel it fell out of — and the wall the residue never crossed, because no bargain can admit anyone where entry depends on an event in a stranger's childhood.

10 — Change and Collapse. **The Left Flank at Marj Dabiq.** No farmer ended it: a rival hierarchy did, arriving through a fracture in this one and paying the two men who broke the line with the two provinces — and an elite that could not adopt gunpowder without dissolving what made it an elite.

11 — The Grim Accounting. **The Canals They Could Not Dredge.** A plague the order did not cause, and an irrigation system its landholding rule left nobody with a reason to repair; the metabolic note called and unpaid; and an Egyptian from the excluded class who wept for the Turks.

12 — Convergence and Divergence. **What the Normans Took and the Mamluks Refused.** One problem, two answers, separated by a single decision about heritable land; and the strongest case for the Mamluks stated at full strength and answered without flinching.

A note on sources. This front matter is descriptive and makes no primary-source claims of its own; every factual assertion about the case is established, with its sources and its caveats, in the module it summarises. The framework it describes is the series'; the disciplines it lists are the ones the modules hold themselves to and document in their own closing notes. The evidentiary limitation declared

above — that no original-language primary text has been verified against an edition, and that the investiture diploma and the chronicle of Ibn Iyas remain unread — applies to the whole study and is repeated in the closing note of every module it touches.

LANDSCAPE

THE PURCHASED AND THE PROCLAIMED

Landscape · the machine before the usurpation — how an Islamic hierarchy came to buy its soldiers because it could not trust the men beside it, and to rent its legitimacy from an office no soldier could occupy

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

There is no second shore

Every other opening in this collection sets two societies facing each other across a distance — a metropole and a coast, a mandarinate and a mission, a chancellery in Rome and a well in the Ogaden — and measures what happened when the far one was laid by force over the near one. That shape is unavailable here, and its absence is the first thing worth stating plainly, because it is not a defect in the case but the case itself.

The men who seized Egypt in the spring of 1250 did not arrive from anywhere. They were already in the country, already in the army, already the decisive part of it; they had spent the preceding twelve months defeating a French king in the Delta on behalf of the sultan they then murdered. They were foreign — bought as boys on the Qipchak steppe, converted, drilled, freed — but they were foreign in the way a tool is foreign to the hand that bought it, which is to say they had been *acquired*, deliberately, at expense, by the very hierarchy they went on to displace. There is no gap between conqueror and conquered to open here, because the conquerors were an instrument the conquered order had commissioned, paid for, and formed.

So the work this opening has to do is different. It has to establish not two societies but one long structure: an Islamic hierarchy that, over four centuries, arrived at a particular answer to a particular problem, watched the answer fail spectacularly, kept using it anyway, and in the meantime built around the failure an apparatus for converting naked force into lawful sovereignty. That apparatus — a man who holds the

swords, and a separate office that alone can say he holds them rightly — was fully assembled and three hundred years old by the time the slave regiment on Rawda island decided to take the throne. Everything singular about what followed rests on the fact that when they took it, they found the apparatus running, understood what it was for, and left it running. The reader who has this landscape has most of the study, because the usurpation of 1250 is not the beginning of the argument. It is the moment the argument's terms are handed to a new set of men.

The order that had already become the world

Beneath the whole of it lay a population whose belief was not in question, and it is worth establishing the depth of that belief early, because it will explain a great deal of cheapness later on.

Egypt and Syria in the thirteenth century were Arabic-speaking and overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, with substantial Coptic Christian and Jewish minorities, and had been six centuries in the making. The Arab conquest of the 640s had laid a new language, law, and calendar over a Christian Egypt of Greek administration and Coptic liturgy, and what followed is the process this collection insists on naming: not the erasure of a native order by a foreign one, but the slow conversion of a foreign imposition into the unremarked shape of the world. By 1250 no Egyptian farmer experienced the sharia as an Arab import. He experienced it as law. The Friday prayer was not a conqueror's rite but the week's hinge. The origin was known — nobody pretended the Prophet had been Egyptian — and it had entirely ceased to be felt as foreign, which is the tell of a conquest that fully took.

The strongest evidence for how deeply it had taken is what happened to the one attempt to shift it. From 969 to 1171 Egypt was ruled by the Fatimids, an Ismaili Shia dynasty holding that authority inhered exclusively in their own line, so that the practice of Sunni Islam was in theory outlawed in Fatimid domains — and yet the practical difficulty of an Ismaili minority imposing its doctrine on a Sunni majority meant the Muslim population of Egypt stayed predominantly Sunni throughout the Fatimid period. Two centuries of state power, a rival caliphate, a dedicated missionary apparatus and the founding of al-Azhar did not move the country. And when the Kurdish officer Saladin, having been made Fatimid vizier in 1169, waited for the last Fatimid caliph to die and then in September 1171 simply had the Friday sermon in Cairo name the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad instead, there was no public outcry when the country was returned to Sunni rule. A dynasty's official creed had been abolished by an alteration to

a sermon, and the population, whose actual creed had never been the dynasty's, did not stir.

That is the ground floor: a belief so thoroughly installed that a state could be built on it or removed from it without the belief itself being at stake. What sat on top of that ground floor is where the problem lived.

The men beside the throne

The Abbasid dynasty had come to power in 749–750 on the backs of an army raised in Khurasan, and the descendants of those soldiers settled in Iraq as the *abna' al-dawla*, the sons of the dynasty, who became the ruling elite of the caliphate and the mainstay of its army. This is the ordinary and unavoidable arrangement: the men who put a house on a throne become the house's indispensable servants, and their indispensability is their standing. It works until the house has an internal quarrel, and then the servants discover what they are holding.

The quarrel came in 809. Harun al-Rashid had divided the succession between two sons — al-Amin to have Baghdad, al-Ma'mun to hold Khurasan as an all but independent appanage — and within two years the arrangement had become a war. Al-Amin moved to subvert Khurasan's autonomy; al-Ma'mun turned to the provincial elites of the east; al-Ma'mun's general Tahir ibn Husayn broke al-Amin's army at Rayy, invaded Iraq, besieged Baghdad for a year, and the city fell, al-Amin was executed, and al-Ma'mun became caliph. The Baghdad *abna'* had overwhelmingly backed the losing brother, and their defeat ended them as a political force.

Read that as the men at the top read it. Two brothers of one house had fought a four-year civil war, and the decisive question throughout had been not who was rightful but whose soldiers would move. The army that had made the dynasty had spent a year besieging the dynasty's own capital on behalf of one half of the family against the other. The lesson available to a surviving caliph was not that his troops had been disloyal — they had been perfectly loyal, to a patron, a quarter, a set of ties, a stake. It was that *loyal to a patron* and *loyal to me* are the same thing only by accident, and that the accident had just cost a caliph his head. The civil war generated a demand for troops loyal only to the caliph, and the demand was met in the most direct way anyone could devise.

Boys with no one

The instrument was not invented from nothing. Caliphs had imported slaves from frontier regions as auxiliaries since the Umayyad period, purchased youths trained for combat providing rulers with forces unbound by the Arab tribal loyalties that ran through the ordinary levies. What changed after the civil war was scale and purpose. Al-Ma'mun developed professional non-Arab units drawn from Turkic and other frontier slaves as the nucleus of a force independent of kinship-based armies, and his half-brother al-Mu'tasim, who succeeded him in 833, made it the centre of the state. Al-Mu'tasim had risen to prominence in the first place through his formation of a private army composed predominantly of Turkic slave-soldiers, which al-Ma'mun had found useful precisely as a counterweight to the other powerful interest groups of the state.

The specification is worth stating exactly, because everything downstream in this study is a test of it. What a purchased boy lacks is not ability. He is bought young, often for physical promise, and then trained for years at his owner's expense until he is among the most formidable cavalrymen in the world; the whole point is that he should be *more* capable than the men he replaces, not less. What he lacks is every basis on which a capable man might make a claim. He has no tribe in the country, no kin, no lineage anyone recognises, no land, no clients, no quarter of Baghdad that is his, no lawful heir, and — because conversion to Islam was immediate and compulsory, restructuring identity around religious and patronal obligation rather than ethnic origin and so eradicating the pre-existing social networks — no prior world to appeal back to. These were forces loyal directly to the caliph rather than to Arab tribal units, introduced to counterbalance the entrenched Arab military factions of Baghdad, which had grown restive amid fiscal strain and ethnic rivalry.

The device, then, is an attempt to separate two things that ordinarily travel together: *capacity*, which a centre cannot do without, and *standing*, which is what turns capacity into a claim other men will act on. Keep the first; strip the second; and the problem that killed al-Amin is solved.

It did not stay solved for thirty years.

What Samarra proved, and what was done with the proof

The friction was immediate and physical. The imported troops were resented by the native Arab population, and riots against them in Baghdad in 836 forced al-Mu'tasim

to move his capital — which he did, founding Samarra on the Tigris north of Baghdad, a new capital established in 836 to house his growing and much-dreaded personal army. Estimates of the corps at the relocation run in the low thousands and should be treated as approximate. A caliph had built a force so alien to his own capital that he moved the capital rather than the force.

Then came the demonstration. In 861 al-Mutawakkil was murdered at a party by a group of Turkish soldiers — the first time the Abbasid military intervened so directly and violently at court, and it set a precedent for further coups. The following period, the "Anarchy at Samarra" of 861 to 870, saw four different caliphs come and go, each attempting to reassert his authority and each at the mercy of military and political factions. They became puppets in the hands of rival military groups: al-Muntasir dead within six months, possibly poisoned; al-Musta'in driven to Baghdad and besieged there by the Samarra troops until the city capitulated, then exiled and executed; al-Mu'tazz, who tried to exclude the military from civil administration, deposed and killed in 869; al-Muhtadi, who tried the same, killed in 870.

Nine years, four caliphs, no successful resistance. The men bought precisely because they could never accumulate standing had discovered that they did not need it — that a body of capable men, concentrated in one place, holding the only serious force in the state and bound to one another by the shared circumstance of their purchase, could dispose of caliphs at will. Everything the buyers had severed had grown back in a functional substitute: the master's household stood in for the tribe, the cohort stood in for the kin, and the barracks stood in for the quarter.

And here is the fact that makes this landscape worth writing at length, because it is the one that ought to be surprising and is instead the most ordinary thing in the record. *Nobody stopped.* Military slavery was not abandoned after Samarra. It became the normal military basis of Islamic states for the next eight hundred years, adopted by dynasty after dynasty across Iran, Anatolia, Egypt, India and North Africa, including — in due course — by the men who would use it to take Egypt. The device's catastrophic failure mode had been published in the most public way imaginable, in the caliphate's own capital, against the caliphate itself, and rulers went on buying boys.

That is not stupidity, and reading it as stupidity is the error the whole framework exists to avoid. It is the arithmetic of a short menu. A ruler who does not buy his soldiers must raise them from somewhere, and every other somewhere is worse: an army of his kinsmen is an army of rival claimants with his own blood in their veins; an army of tribes is an army whose chiefs can bargain and leave; an army of a landed

nobility is an army that owns the country and can starve him of it. The purchased soldier fails late and catastrophically. The alternatives fail early and continuously. Given that menu, a rational apex takes the late catastrophe every time, and hopes it lands on his grandson.

Two seats

Something else grew in the wreckage, and it is the second half of the machine.

Once the soldiers had shown that they disposed of caliphs, the political question became what a caliph was still *for* — and the answer that emerged over the following century is the arrangement the Mamluks would inherit whole. In the 930s al-Radi, unable to send armies against governors who would not obey him, was forced to invite the governor of Wasit to take over the administration under a newly created position, *amir al-umara*, commander of commanders; the man who took it disbanded the caliph's salaried army and stripped away much of the state's bureaucratic apparatus, including the vizierate, removing much of the Abbasid state's basis for power. The office was then fought over by soldiers for a decade until, in 945, the Daylamite Buyids took Baghdad. The caliph al-Mustakfi was compelled to invest their leader with the title *amir al-umara*, making him supreme military and civil commander and reducing the caliph to a figurehead; the office carried control of the military, taxation, coinage and diplomacy, supplanting the caliph's secular functions entirely — and yet the Buyids, who were Shia, maintained the fiction of Abbasid legitimacy as a pragmatic means of securing the loyalty of Baghdad's Sunni bureaucracy and populace. They built their own palace beside the caliphal one, two centres of power side by side, one symbolic and one actual.

Consider what has been revealed there. A Shia warlord holding uncontested force in the capital, who could have killed the Sunni caliph on any afternoon of a hundred years, instead kept him housed, fed, and issuing documents. Force does not pay for what it does not need. The expenditure is the evidence.

The Seljuks then repeated the move from the other direction. After Dandanaqan, Tughril and the Seljuk leadership wrote to the caliph al-Qa'im requesting an official decree of authority, and were granted it; in 1055 Tughril entered Baghdad, ended Buyid rule in the city, and established Seljuk political dominance while the caliph remained the nominal religious authority — the caliph having himself invited the Seljuks in to be rid of the Buyids, which is a fair picture of what his office had become:

it could not raise a regiment, but it could confer a title on whoever had one, and that conferral was worth armies.

By the middle of the eleventh century, then, sovereignty in the Sunni world had settled into two seats. In one sat whoever held the swords, styled sultan, wielding taxation, coinage, appointment and war. In the other sat the caliph, who commanded nothing and alone could pronounce the man in the first seat lawful — through the diploma of investiture, through the mention of his name in the Friday sermon, through the right to strike coin. The arrangement was not a scandal awaiting correction. It was written down as law. Al-Mawardi, chief qadi of Baghdad and a working servant of both the caliph and the Buyid regime, composed in these years the *Ahkam al-Sultaniyya*, the foundational treatise of Sunni political jurisprudence, and in it set out the category of *imarat al-istila* — the emirate acquired by seizure — justifying the rule of military leaders who came to power by force, provided they maintained order and upheld Islamic principles, so that a ruler who had established effective control and governed according to the law was legitimate and to be obeyed even without formal caliphal appointment.

A jurist watching soldiers make and unmake caliphs had written the constitution of that fact. Take power however you can; uphold the sharia; acknowledge the office; and you are the lawful ruler. This is the machine. It is not a fiction anyone was hiding. It is a published rule, two centuries old before the Mamluks needed it, that told an armed man exactly what he had to do to convert force into sovereignty — and, just as precisely, what he could not do without.

A confederation of cousins

Egypt reached 1250 by its own road to the same place.

Saladin, having ended the Fatimid caliphate in 1171 and realigned Egypt with Baghdad, did not build a centralised state. The Ayyubid sultanate has been described as a family confederation, its branches ruling Egypt, Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and a scatter of lordships across the Jazira, funded by *iqta'* — assignments of the tax revenue of land in exchange for military and administrative service. The reasons were sound and are worth stating in the founder's own position rather than as a failing: Saladin's relatives were a numerous clan, proud and talented men with ambitions of their own who would expect rewards commensurate with their status, and as a usurper himself he could hardly rely on the principle of dynastic succession to secure his heirs'

authority — so he seated them, everywhere, and bought the family's cohesion with appanages.

He had thereby answered the open problem by co-opting his own kin, and the bill for that answer came due on schedule. Within a generation the sons were fighting over the division; within four generations, as Encyclopaedia Iranica puts it, the ruling princes were no longer close kin but in effect autonomous dynasts sharing a common ancestor. Every one of them held a city, a revenue, and a retinue, and every one had a claim.

Which brings the whole four-century sequence to a single man in a single decade. Al-Salih Ayyub, nominal head of the Ayyubid house from 1240, wrenched the confederation — or the parts of it he controlled — into a unitary state governed by men who were his functionaries rather than his colleagues, and who were not members of the Ayyubid family.

Functionaries rather than colleagues. That is the whole device in four words, and it is the position speaking, not the temperament. A colleague has standing: he can bargain, withhold, defect, and be seated elsewhere. A functionary has none, and can only be dismissed. Al-Salih had every reason to want the second kind. A powerful faction of emirs, the Ashrafiyya, was conspiring to depose him in favour of his uncle; he shut himself in the Cairo citadel and could no longer trust even the emirs who had brought him to power; and the lack of soldiers he could rely on led him to begin buying Kipchak slaves in large numbers, available in unusual quantity because of the Mongol invasions of Central Asia. He prioritised them as steppe horsemen skilled in archery and cavalry, purchased to build a personal force unbound by local loyalties or tribal affiliation.

He was not the first Ayyubid to use mamluks but the first to depend on them so heavily, establishing two full corps of up to a thousand men each, one of them garrisoned on Rawda island in the Nile — the River Corps, the *Bahriyya*. Boys were bought young on the fringes of the Muslim world by merchants who imported them to the capitals, and sold to the sultan or to emirs; those destined for the regiments went to barracks for training. In principle, though not always in practice, a mamluk could not pass his property or his title to his son, and sons were in theory denied the opportunity to serve in the regiments, so that the group had to be constantly replenished from outside.

An island in the river, a thousand purchased boys, and a sultan barricaded in his own citadel because he could not trust his cousins. That is the eve.

The refusal

The end came fast and is worth having exactly, because one detail in it reframes everything that follows.

Louis IX of France landed in the Delta in 1249 and took Damietta. Al-Salih, already dying, was carried to the camp at Mansura and died there in November; his widow Shajar al-Durr — herself a former slave, of Turkic or Armenian origin — concealed the death until the heir, Turanshah, could arrive from the Jazira. The purchased regiments then did what they had been bought to do, defeating the crusade in the spring of 1250 and capturing the King of France. Turanshah, newly installed, began replacing his father's men with his own and quarrelling with his stepmother over the late sultan's treasure; on 2 May 1250 he was killed by Baybars and other mamluk soldiers, and the Ayyubid line in Egypt ended.

Shajar al-Durr was proclaimed sultana. She held Cairo, the treasury, and the loyalty of the regiments that had just beaten a crusade — and it was not enough. Both the Ayyubids in Syria and the Abbasid caliph al-Musta'sim in Baghdad refused to recognise her, and rejected the Mamluk move in Egypt outright. She lasted until July. Her mamluk husband Aybak took the title in her place and held it for under a week, and then, because the Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo had been welcomed into Damascus and was preparing to march on Egypt, and the Mamluks understood that if he reached Cairo he would find enough of a welcome to threaten them seriously, they decided it would be prudent to have a nominal Ayyubid sultan in Cairo to give their rule a veneer of legitimacy — so Aybak stood down and the six-year-old al-Ashraf Musa was proclaimed sultan in his place, with Aybak reverting to commander-in-chief and ruling in fact for four years before dismissing the child and taking the title again.

Stand at Aybak's shoulder and look at the arithmetic. He held every soldier in Egypt. There was no rival army in the country, no native aristocracy, no institution that could raise a hand against him. And he could not sit down. A man in Baghdad with no troops had said no, and the no was effective; and so the most powerful man in Egypt spent four years running the country from the second chair while a six-year-old sat in the first.

Eight years later the Mongols sacked Baghdad and killed the caliph, and the Muslim world was left without the office that had sometimes endowed distant rulers with legitimacy by sending them writs of investiture. What the Mamluks did about that is Module 3's business and not this landscape's, though the shape of it is already predictable from everything above: in 1261 an Abbasid refugee, uncle of the murdered

caliph, arrived in Cairo, was proclaimed caliph, and duly invested Baybars as sultan. The men who had just proved that force could take the throne of Egypt spent the next two and a half centuries maintaining, at their own expense, a powerless old man in Cairo whose sole function was to say they held it lawfully — an office strictly ceremonial and nonetheless important, whose diplomas of investiture were still being sought by the sultans of Delhi and by the Ottoman Bayezid I.

They kept it because they had watched what happened when it said no.

Reading the landscape against the framework

Two refinements come out of this ground, and one prediction that the following modules exist to test.

The recursion runs one level further up than the framework has so far stated it. The collection already holds that a conqueror never meets an aboriginal order, only an earlier conquest naturalised — and Egypt confirms it cleanly, a seventh-century Arab imposition so completely become the world that a Shia state could not shift it in two hundred years and a Sunni restoration could be accomplished by changing a sermon. But this case shows the same recursion operating on the *answers* as well as the orders. A ruler facing the problem of the capable men beside him does not meet a fresh problem and reach for a fresh solution. He inherits a previously failed answer, generally knows it failed, and reaches for it again — because the menu is short and every other item fails sooner. Military slavery had been publicly demonstrated to end in murdered caliphs in the 860s; al-Salih Ayyub bought a thousand steppe boys in the 1240s anyway, for the excellent reason that the alternative sitting in front of him was a conspiracy of his own cousins. The framework should therefore expect not only naturalised orders but naturalised *devices* — instruments carried forward across centuries and dynasties with their failure modes fully documented, adopted not in ignorance but in preference to worse. Where a study finds an apex using a method that visibly destroyed its predecessors, the question is not why it was so foolish but what the other columns of its ledger looked like.

And the revealed-preference test gains a sharper form: the refusal. The card already holds that an apex with uncontested force which nonetheless pays a real, avoidable price for legitimacy has proven by that payment that the legitimacy was needed. This case supplies the stronger version, because in 1250 the office did not merely charge — it *declined*, and was obeyed. A caliph a thousand miles away, with no army, no treasury, and eight years left to live before the Mongols killed him, withheld

recognition from a woman who held Cairo outright, and she fell within three months; and the mamluk who replaced her, holding every sword in Egypt, put a six-year-old on the throne rather than test the point again. Consent that is purchased can always be read as ornament a ruler happened to buy. A refusal that is complied with cannot. Where the record shows a legitimating office saying no to a man who could have killed it, and the man submitting, the analyst has the cleanest possible measurement of what the office was actually worth — and this study will have that measurement at its very first date, which is why it can afford to be cold about everything after it.

The prediction. The device the whole sequence turns on is an attempt to hold capacity and standing apart — to buy men formidable enough to be worth having and stripped of every ground on which a formidable man makes a claim. The record of 861–870 says the separation does not hold, and says why: what the purchase severed grew back in manufactured form, the household standing in for the tribe and the cohort for the kin. The Mamluks are about to run that experiment a second time, from the other side of it, as the apex rather than the instrument, with full knowledge of how it ends and a set of deliberate refinements meant to prevent the recurrence. Whether standing regenerates wherever capacity is concentrated — whether a class can be kept capable and claimless at all, or whether the attempt merely determines the shape the claims will later take — is the question the next twelve modules are built to answer. The order they will describe ran an expensive apparatus of purchase, barracks and surveillance over a population that needed almost none of it, because the belief that held Egypt had been installed six centuries before any Mamluk arrived and cost the sultanate nothing to use. That contrast — a cheaply held country governed by a caste that could not hold *itself* cheaply for a decade at a time — is most of what this study is measuring.

A note on sources. This landscape carries no exact primary quotation, and the omission is deliberate rather than incidental: the surviving primary material for this period is in medieval Arabic, and this project's discipline forbids reconstructing or transliterating wording that has not been verified against a real edition or a scholarly translation reproducing it. Everything above is therefore paraphrase, and where an arresting phrase appears it belongs to a modern source and is credited as such — in particular the characterisation of al-Salih Ayyub's reforms as producing functionaries rather than colleagues, which is the wording of the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry on the Ayyubids, paraphrased here. The primary texts that the argument will eventually need — a caliphal investiture diploma (*taqlid*), the sultanic protocol, al-Mawardi's own formulation of *imarat al-istila*, and the chroniclers al-Maqrizi, Ibn Taghribirdi and Ibn Iyas on the factional politics of the sultanate — are named here as

research targets and will be quoted in the modules only where verified against an edition or a translation reproducing the text. Al-Mawardi's *Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* is described above from secondary accounts of its content, not from its wording. The narrative dating follows standard reference and specialist accounts: the Fourth Fitna of 811–813 and the eclipse of the *abna'*; al-Mu'tasim's reign from 833 and the founding of Samarra in 836; the Anarchy at Samarra, 861–870, and its four caliphs; the creation of the office of *amir al-umara* in the 930s, the Buyid entry into Baghdad in 945 and the Seljuk entry in 1055; the Fatimid period of 969–1171 and Saladin's alteration of the Cairo *khutba* in September 1171, for which sources give several different days of that month and which is therefore given here only by month; the Ayyubid family confederation and al-Salih Ayyub's reign of 1240–1249; the Bahriyya on Rawda island; the events of 1249–50 from Damietta to the killing of Turanshah on 2 May and the proclamation of al-Ashraf Musa; and the installation of an Abbasid caliph in Cairo in 1261. Figures are given as ranges or as approximations throughout and none is load-bearing here: the size of al-Mu'tasim's original Turkish corps (low thousands), the strength of al-Salih's two corps (up to a thousand men each), and the religious composition of thirteenth-century Egypt and Syria are all contested or imprecise in the record, and the modules that need them will source them separately. Where this landscape has leaned on encyclopaedic summaries for narrative sequence, the specialist literature — David Ayalon on the mamluk institution, Robert Irwin and R. Stephen Humphreys on the Ayyubid-to-Mamluk transition, Hugh Kennedy and Matthew Gordon on the Samarra period — should be consulted before any of it is treated as settled, and will be in the modules that follow.

MODULE 1

THE HEADS ON BAB ZUWEILA

Module 1 · The floor of force — how a purchased regiment founded a state by being the only army that could stop the Mongols, and why the country it took was among the cheapest ground in the world to hold

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The gate they opened

The founding of this order can be dated to a decision about a town gate.

In June 1249 Louis IX of France landed in the Nile Delta and took Damietta, intending to break Egypt and from there recover Jerusalem. By February 1250 the crusade had ground to a halt on the far bank of the Bahr al-Saghir canal opposite the town of Mansura, where the Egyptian army was camped and would not let it cross. Then a local showed the crusaders a ford — the sources differ on who he was and on what he was paid — and on 8 February the vanguard went over.

What followed is the point. Robert of Artois, the king's brother, crossed with the Knights Templar and an English contingent under William of Salisbury, fell on the Egyptian camp at Gideila some three kilometres from Mansura, and pushed on toward the town; the Egyptian commander Fakhr al-Din was killed in the surprise attack and the Egyptian troops fell back into Mansura. At that moment the Ayyubid army had no sultan — al-Salih Ayyub had died the previous November and his death was still being concealed — and no field commander. Leadership passed to the mamluks: Qutuz, Faris al-Din Aqtay and Baybars al-Bunduqdari contained the attack and reorganised the retreating forces. This was the first appearance of the mamluks as supreme commanders inside Egypt.

And then, according to the Arabic tradition, Baybars ordered the gate opened, and the crusaders rushed in thinking the town deserted, only to find themselves trapped inside, besieged from all directions by the Egyptian forces and the townspeople, and

taking heavy losses. Robert of Artois and William Longespée were both killed. The Templar losses are given very differently by different sources — one tradition holds that of some two hundred and ninety Templars only a handful got out — and the numbers on both sides for the whole engagement range so widely, from a few thousand Egyptian cavalry to a claimed seventy thousand, that none of them should be leaned on.

The mechanism does not depend on the numbers. A purchased regiment, its patron dead and unburied, its state momentarily without a head, took command of a national army in the middle of a battle and destroyed the vanguard of a European crusade by letting it into a town it could not fight in. That is the moment the men who would rule Egypt for two hundred and sixty-seven years discovered what they were.

A king in a house

The rest of the crusade unravelled over eight weeks. Louis offered to trade Damietta for Jerusalem and some towns on the Syrian coast; the Egyptians, who could see the state of his camp, refused. On the night of 5 April the crusaders abandoned their position and fled north toward Damietta, and in their haste failed to destroy a pontoon bridge they had laid across the canal; the Egyptians crossed on it, caught them at Fariskur, and destroyed them. Louis and the few nobles still with him were taken in the nearby village of Moniat Abdallah, where they had gone to ground.

The terms were what a king is worth. He was ransomed, undertook never to return to Egypt, surrendered Damietta, and was allowed to leave on 8 May 1250 for Acre with his brothers and twelve thousand prisoners the Egyptians agreed to release — while many other captives were executed. The ransom figure is genuinely contested and should be given as a range rather than a number: sources variously report four hundred thousand dinars, four hundred thousand *livres tournois*, five hundred thousand *livres tournois*, and eight hundred thousand bezants, with one account setting the king's personal ransom inside a larger demand for the army as a whole. What is not contested is the order of magnitude — four hundred thousand *livres tournois* against a French annual royal revenue of roughly a million and a quarter — nor the political fact, which is that this was the first and only occasion in French history on which a Capetian king was taken prisoner on a battlefield.

For a body of slave-soldiers looking for a claim on the world, that is a considerable acquisition. The men who had been bought as boys on the steppe now held the King of France in a guarded house.

Ten weeks

Set two dates beside each other and the whole logic of this order is visible before it has properly begun.

On 6 April 1250 the mamluk regiments captured the King of France on behalf of the Ayyubid sultan Turanshah. On 2 May 1250 — twenty-six days later — Turanshah was killed by Baybars and other mamluk soldiers. Louis IX was still in Egypt. He was not released until 8 May. The King of France therefore spent the last week of his captivity as the prisoner of a dynasty that had, in the interval, been destroyed by the very men who had captured him and were still guarding him.

There is no contradiction between the two acts and it is important not to reach for one. The same capability performed both: a body of professional heavy cavalry, drilled together, quartered together, bound to one another by the circumstances of their purchase, and holding the only serious concentration of force in the country. Turanshah had arrived from the Jazira in February, begun replacing his father's men with his own, and quarrelled with his stepmother over the late sultan's treasure. He was, in other words, doing exactly what a new sultan does — and he was doing it to men who had just discovered, at Mansura, that the state's survival ran through their hands and nobody else's.

The framework's ordinary expectation of a founding conquest is that somebody gets disarmed. Look for the disarmament here and it is not there, because it had happened long before and to nobody in particular: Egypt's population had not been armed in any militarily meaningful sense for centuries, the country's violence having been monopolised by successive professional forces — Fatimid regiments, Kurdish and Turkmen troopers, purchased cavalry — none of them drawn from the villages. The mamluks did not have to conquer Egypt. They had to kill one man. The founding act of this order is a murder in a camp on the Delta, and it is not a small event dressed up as a large one; it is a large event that genuinely required almost no violence, because the arrangement it captured had already done the necessary violence generations earlier and handed the result over intact.

The heads on Bab Zuweila

The new arrangement held Egypt but had no standing anywhere, and for a decade it looked provisional: Aqtay murdered in 1254, Aybak murdered in 1257, Shajar al-Durr beaten to death weeks later, Aybak's young son deposed by his own commander in

1259. Then the thing arrived that made the sultanate permanent, and it arrived from the east.

The Mongols under Hulagu took Baghdad in 1258 and put the caliph to death, then took Damascus. Hulagu sent envoys to Cairo demanding that Qutuz surrender Egypt; Qutuz killed the envoys and displayed their heads on Bab Zuweila, one of the gates of Cairo.

The Persian historian Rashid al-Din, writing for the Mongols a generation later, preserves an account of the council at which this was decided. It should be read as what medieval chronicle usually is — a reconstruction, with speeches composed to carry the sense of a decision rather than transcribe it — but the reasoning attributed to Qutuz is the sharpest statement of this order's position that survives from anywhere near the event. His commanders, he says, have three courses: "we must make a truce, offer resistance, or go into exile". Truce is dismissed because the Mongols do not keep terms, and the emir Nasir al-Din Qaymari is made to list the men who accepted assurances and were killed anyway — the caliph among them. And exile is dismissed on grounds of pure geography: there is nowhere to go except North Africa, and between Egypt and North Africa lies a killing desert and a very long way.

That is a ruler, in the presence of an existential threat, working the same arithmetic this collection asks of the humblest peasant in the ledger, and reaching the same conclusion for the same reason. *There is no exit.* The commanders of Egypt were as trapped in Egypt as the farmers were, and the fact that they arrived at resistance by elimination rather than by courage is not a debunking of the courage; it is the shape of the position they were standing in.

Ayn Jalut

The Mongol force that had to be fought was not the one that took Baghdad. Möngke Khan died, requiring Hulagu and other senior Mongols to return home to settle the succession; Hulagu took the majority of his army with him and left west of the Euphrates only around one or two *tumens* — nominally ten to twenty thousand men — under his Naiman Christian general Kitbuqa. More recent work adds a second reason for the withdrawal that has nothing to do with politics: an army of that size could not be fed in that country. Both should be held; the Mamluk victory has been over-explained in both directions for seven centuries.

Qutuz assembled his army at Cairo and marched on 26 July 1260, and on 3 September 1260 the two forces met in the Jezreel Valley at the spring of Ayn Jalut. The

Mamluks fought the Mongols with the Mongols' own method: a feigned retreat by Baybars and the vanguard drew Kitbuqa into a trap, and even then the fighting was hard enough that Qutuz had to lead his reserves in personally. The Mamluks concealed the bulk of their force in the hills, attacked from all sides once the Mongols were committed, and Kitbuqa was killed; the defection of Syrian auxiliaries to the Mamluk side contributed to the collapse. They then made the most of the propaganda value of the victory, sending Kitbuqa's head to Cairo on a staff. The claim, repeated in several accounts, that hand cannon were used to panic the Mongol horses rests on later military treatises and is disputed; it should be flagged and not built on.

What the victory bought is the thing this module exists to name. It halted the westward expansion of the Mongol empire at the moment when the Muslim world had just lost its caliph, its greatest city and its ancient capital, and it was won by a body of foreign slaves ruling Egypt on no warrant but possession. From that afternoon, the answer to the question of what right these men had to govern was available in a form no theologian could improve on: *because when the Mongols came, we were what stood there.* This is a robe earned on a battlefield rather than cut for an audience, and it has a peculiar property — the same catastrophe that made the sultanate indispensable had also emptied the office that could have licensed it, so the men who saved Islamic sovereignty in the field were left holding a sovereignty nobody could yet pronounce lawful. What they did about that is the next module's business.

Seven weeks

On the return journey to Cairo a group of emirs killed the sultan while he was separated from his army and retinue during a hunt; Baybars played a prominent role in the plot. The date was 24 October 1260, at Salihiyya — seven weeks and one day after Ayn Jalut. Baybars then seized power for himself.

The reasons given in the sources are the ordinary reasons: the Bahriyya's standing grievance against Qutuz, who had killed their former commander and driven them into exile, an alliance made uneasy by the Mongol emergency, and a quarrel over the distribution of what had been won. Reports that Baybars had been promised Aleppo and refused it belong to the later tradition and should be treated as such.

Register what has now happened twice in a decade. The force that saved the Ayyubid dynasty from Louis IX destroyed it four weeks later. The sultan who saved Egypt from the Mongols was murdered by his own vanguard commander seven weeks later. In both cases the killing was done by men whose loyalty in the field had been

beyond reproach, and in neither case did anything about the state change except the name of the man at the top. Baybars entered a Cairo already celebrating the victory and was received well, and is reported to have cancelled the war taxes Qutuz had imposed — the first act of a new sultan being to buy the city he had just taken by murder.

The shape of the ground

A floor is cheap or expensive according to the country it stands on, and Egypt is close to the cheapest country there is.

The inhabited part of it is a river and its delta: a valley a few miles wide for six hundred miles, with absolute desert on both sides, opening into the fan of the Delta. Every town, every field, every granary and every road sits on that ribbon. A population cannot disperse into hills because there are no hills to disperse into; it cannot melt into forest, or cross into a neighbouring polity in a week's walk, or take to a plateau and wait. The famine risk runs through a single flood; the food supply runs through a single set of granaries; the tax base is a strip of land so legible that it had been surveyed and assessed, in one administrative tradition or another, for three thousand years.

Above Cairo sits the Citadel, built by Saladin on a promontory of the Muqattam hills, the seat of government and residence of Egypt's rulers for nearly seven hundred years, commanding the city below it. Under the Mamluks, Cairo's paramountcy over the Syrian provinces was consistent and absolute, with the Citadel serving as the sultan's headquarters.

Two consequences follow, and they run in opposite directions, which is why this study will keep returning to them.

The first is that the country is exceptionally easy to hold *against its own population*. The cost column that a peasant faces when he contemplates defiance is filled almost entirely by geography before any soldier is posted anywhere: the enforcer can always reach him, and there is nowhere he can go that is not either the same valley or the sand. This is why the sultanate could afford a belief-heavy, force-light relationship with the people it ruled, and why the surveillance apparatus that marks anxious orders elsewhere is largely absent here. The floor did not need to be thick on the ground because the ground did the work.

The second is that a country this easy to hold is, by exactly the same properties, easy to *take*. There is one apex, in one fortress, above one city, controlling one valley. A faction that seizes the Citadel has seized Egypt; it does not need to fight a campaign, garrison a frontier, or subdue a countryside, because the countryside has no capacity to

resist and no alternative centre to rally to. The geography that made the ruled cheap to govern made the rulers cheap to replace — and the two hundred and sixty-seven years of factional murder that follow are, in part, a property of the terrain. Every civil war in this study is a fight for a building.

What the army actually was

The instrument itself has to be described with some care, because its internal shape is the fault line everything later runs along.

After Ayn Jalut, Baybars restructured the army into three components: the Royal Mamluk regiment, the soldiers of the emirs, and the *halqa*, the non-mamluk troops. The Royal Mamluks, under the sultan's direct command, were the highest-ranking body and entry was exclusive — effectively the sultan's private corps. The emirs' soldiers were commanded directly by their emirs and mobilised by the sultan when required; as an emir was promoted the size of his corps grew; and when rival emirs challenged one another they used those forces, with major disruption to civilian life. The Royal Mamluks were bought and owned by the sultan himself as first-generation slaves and were loyal to him accordingly.

Sizes should be given as ranges and treated with suspicion. One careful modern estimate puts the whole standing force — mamluk regiments and *halqa* together — at no more than thirty to forty thousand and possibly fewer, concentrated primarily in Cairo. Individual great emirs held private followings that in the later period commonly ran to two or four hundred mamluks, with exceptional figures holding a thousand or more; in the fourteenth century the emir Yalbugha al-Umari is recorded with a personal army of four thousand. The training pipeline, as the general accounts describe it, took boys of roughly ten to fifteen, purchased through the slave trade and brought to Cairo, through some seven years of barracks instruction in Arabic, Islam and the mounted arts before manumission and posting; the specifics vary by period and by author and the specialist literature should be preferred to any summary of it.

The decisive feature is not the size. It is that the sultan's army was not one army. It was his own household plus a coalition of other men's households, each of which had been formed by the same method, was loyal by the same bond, and was the private property of an emir who had every incentive to keep it that way. The distinction between the sultan and any great emir was, structurally, a difference of degree: both had bought boys, raised them, freed them, and held their allegiance personally. That is a floor whose every load-bearing member is also a potential claimant, and it explains at a

stroke why nobody in this order was ever safe at the top and why the population underneath was so completely safe from insurrection. The danger ran entirely sideways.

The founding legend and what it covers

The story this order told about its own beginning is true, which is what makes it effective. The Mamluks defeated a crusade led by a king of France and captured the king; they stopped the Mongols at Ayn Jalut when nobody else had stopped them anywhere; they went on to take the crusader states apart over the following three decades. There is no fabrication in any of it and this study will not manufacture one.

What the legend covers is not a lie but an omission of tense. It records what the army did to foreigners and is silent about what the army did to sultans. In the ten years the legend celebrates, the men it celebrates murdered the last Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, murdered the commander of the Bahriyya, murdered the first Mamluk sultan, beat his widow to death, deposed his son, and murdered the victor of Ayn Jalut on the road home from Ayn Jalut. The victory that founds the order and the killing that transfers it are seven weeks apart and were done by the same hands.

Both are the same fact seen from different sides: a body of professional violence with no owner above it. Against the Mongols that produced the best army in the world. Against its own sultans it produced a throne that no man ever left alive by ordinary means. The founding legend is the outward face of an arrangement whose inward face is a permanent civil war among the men who made it — and the study's central question is how something with that inward face lasted two and a half centuries.

Reading the floor of force against the framework

The card asks who was disarmed at the founding, and how, and this case answers that nobody was — which turns out to be the module's contribution rather than a gap in it.

The framework already holds that a conqueror meeting an administratively deep order will preserve rather than raze it, because the accumulated competence cannot be rebuilt in a generation, and that the operative question is whether the apparatus is organised into offices a stranger can enter. This case adds a second inheritance running alongside the first, and it is the one that sets the *price* of the founding. **A conqueror inherits not only an administration but a disarmament.** Where the order being displaced had already monopolised violence in a professional body separate from the

population — a standing army, a slave corps, a garrison caste — the incoming power acquires that monopoly whole and does not have to perform the conquest at all. It has only to capture the apex. Egypt in 1250 changed hands by the killing of one man in a camp, with no campaign, no siege, no pacification and no subsequent rising, because the country had been comprehensively disarmed by somebody else, centuries earlier, as a by-product of arrangements that had nothing to do with the men who now benefited from them.

This bears directly on how a founding should be read. A study that measures the violence of a conquest by the size of the founding battle will systematically misjudge orders of this kind, recording as gentle or bloodless what was in fact enormously violent — merely at a different time, against different people, by a different apparatus. The absence of a founding massacre is not evidence that a population consented; it may be evidence that the population's capacity to withhold consent had been extinguished so long before that nobody living could remember it being taken. And it yields a testable prediction for the cases: **the cheaper a conquest looks at its founding moment, the more thoroughly some previous order did the expensive work** — so the first question to ask of a suspiciously easy takeover is not why the conqueror was strong but who disarmed the country, and when.

The geography reinforces the same reading from underneath, and the two together set the terms for everything that follows in this study. A single valley with no exit and one fortress above one city makes the ruled almost costless to hold, which is why this order could run so light a hand on a population of millions; and it makes the ruler almost costless to replace, which is why the men who held that fortress could never rest. The order about to be described was, for the ordinary Egyptian, among the most securely founded in this collection, and for the men who founded it, among the most dangerous places to stand that the record contains. Both facts have the same cause.

A note on sources. One exact quotation appears above, and it is not from the original language: Qutuz's statement of his three options is quoted in W. M. Thackston's translation of Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-Tawarikh*, as republished by De Re Militari with permission, and everything else drawn from that council scene — the dismissal of a truce on the ground that the Mongols had broken faith with the caliph and others, and the dismissal of exile on the ground that only desert lay between Egypt and North Africa — is paraphrased from the same translation rather than quoted. That passage should be read as medieval chronicle convention: Rashid al-Din was an Ilkhanid official writing a generation after the event, and the speeches are composed rather than recorded, so the reasoning is offered here as the best surviving contemporary statement of the Mamluk position and not as a transcript. No

Arabic is quoted anywhere in this module, because none has been verified against an edition; the *taqlid*, the sultanic protocol, and the passages of al-Maqrizi, Ibn Taghribirdi and Ibn Iyas bearing on these years remain research targets and will be quoted only when verified. The narrative dating follows standard reference and specialist accounts: the landing at Damietta in June 1249; the death of al-Salih Ayyub in November 1249 and the concealment of it; Mansura, 8–11 February 1250, the killing of Fakhr al-Din, the entry into the town and the deaths of Robert of Artois and William Longespée; the retreat of 5 April and the destruction at Fariskur on 6 April, with at least one account dating the final destruction to 9 April; Louis IX's capture at Moniat Abdallah and release on 8 May 1250; the murder of Turanshah on 2 May 1250; the fall of Baghdad and execution of the caliph in 1258; the killing of Hulagu's envoys and the display of their heads on Bab Zuweila; the death of Möngke and Hulagu's withdrawal; Qutuz's march from Cairo on 26 July 1260; Ayn Jalut on 3 September 1260 and the death of Kitbuqa; and the murder of Qutuz at Salihiyya on 24 October 1260. Several figures here are contested and are given as ranges for that reason: the troop strengths at Mansura, where estimates run from a few thousand Egyptian cavalry to a claimed seventy thousand and cannot be reconciled; the Templar casualties; Louis IX's ransom, variously reported as four hundred thousand dinars, four hundred thousand or five hundred thousand *livres tournois*, and eight hundred thousand bezants, and sometimes as the king's share of a larger demand; the size of Kitbuqa's force at one to two *tumens*; and the standing strength of the Mamluk army, for which the estimate of thirty to forty thousand or fewer is one careful modern reading and not a settled figure. The reported use of hand cannon at Ayn Jalut rests on later treatises and is flagged as disputed rather than asserted. Where this module has relied on encyclopaedic summaries for narrative sequence and on general accounts for the training pipeline and army structure, the specialist literature should be preferred and will be worked into the modules that follow: David Ayalon on the structure of the mamluk army, Reuven Amitai on the Mamluk–Ilkhanid war and Ayn Jalut in particular, Robert Irwin on the early sultanate, and R. Stephen Humphreys on the Ayyubid collapse.

MODULE 2

TWENTY-FOUR PARTS OF A COUNTRY

Module 2 · The settlement — a ruling caste that took the revenue of Egypt and refused to own an acre of it, because land a man can leave to his son turns a caste into a nobility; and the sacred loophole through which it smuggled inheritance back in anyway

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What the instrument found

Most conquerors arrive to discover that the wealth they want is held in a form they cannot take. Land sits in lineages, or in collective patrimony, or in offices attached to persons, and before any of it can be granted to anyone it has to be converted into something transferable — which is a legislative task, and the statute that performs it is usually the most revealing document a conquest produces.

The men who took Egypt in 1250 had no such task, and the absence is the first finding of this module.

Egypt's cultivated land was already, in the main, state land, its revenue assessed as *kharaj* and administered through a fiscal bureaucracy with a continuous documentary tradition running back through the Fatimids to the Arab conquest and beyond it into Roman and Ptolemaic practice. Saladin had established the *iqta'* in Egypt on becoming Fatimid vizier in 1169, adapting a model developed in Buyid Iraq to fund a military regime through assignments of land revenue rather than salaries; after deposing the Fatimids in 1171 he confiscated the holdings of Shi'ite officials and palace elites and reallocated them to his own supporters, who supplied cavalry in proportion to the revenue of their grants — dismantling the Fatimid reliance on cash payments and hereditary assignment in favour of temporary usufruct tied strictly to military obligation. The Mamluks inherited the Ayyubid taxation system and initially kept it, though it appears they did not continue the practice of inheriting an *iqta'*; Qalawun, reigning from 1279 to 1290, ordered his governors to draw up detailed lists of the

revenue of individual *iqta'at* in their provinces, and further fiscal reorganisations followed.

So the wealth was already a *relation and not a thing* when they found it — a revocable claim on a stream of revenue, granted by an apex, cancellable by the same apex, tied to service. No conversion was required, no fiction of vacancy or of prior possession, no statute dissolving a collective holding into saleable shares. The instrument the conquest needed had been built and refined by other men over five hundred years, and the usurpation of 1250 consisted of putting different names in the register.

That has a consequence worth stating plainly before the arithmetic. Where a conqueror must manufacture the transferability of what he is taking, the manufacture leaves a document, and the document is evidence. Where he inherits a fiscal machine already designed to assign revenue to soldiers, there is no founding instrument at all — and a study looking for one will conclude, wrongly, that no settlement was made. The settlement here is a set of ledger entries, and the ledger is the evidence.

The twenty-four parts

The arithmetic is astonishingly direct. For the purpose of distributing and allocating the *iqta'*, the cultivated land of Egypt was divided into twenty-four *qirats* — a *qirat* being simply a twenty-fourth part. The sultan, as supreme ruler and head of every branch of government, held the highest-yielding territories as his own *iqta'*, known as the *khass* of the sultan; the emirs received an *iqta'* according to their rank and the sultan's favour. Four of the twenty-four parts were the sultan's own before the great resurvey of the fourteenth century; the remainder was divided among the emirs and the non-mamluk troops.

Read the figure for what it is. It is not a metaphor for national wealth. It is an administrative fraction, used by working clerks, in which the entire productive surface of a country is treated as a single divisible quantity and portioned out among a few thousand men. There is no comparable statement of a settlement anywhere in this collection — not a grant of estates to named chiefs, not a schedule of leases, but a country expressed as a fraction and then apportioned by decree.

Baybars gave the fractions a structure. The Ayyubid army had lacked a clear and permanent hierarchy, and one of his early reforms was to create one, assigning emirs ranks of ten, forty and one hundred, the number indicating how many mounted mamluk troops were assigned to the emir's command — with an emir of one hundred

able to be given a thousand mounted troops in battle. He ended the improvised character of the Ayyubid forces, and he and Qalawun standardised the previously undefined policy on distributing *iqta'at*, creating a clear link between an emir's rank and the size of his assignment.

So the settlement and the army are one object. A man's rank names the number of soldiers he must produce; his assignment is calibrated to yield the revenue that produces them; and the revenue is a fraction of a country measured in twenty-fourths. What the framework calls the settlement's most diagnostic question — *what did the grantee owe in return?* — has an unambiguous answer here, and it is the dangerous one. **The consideration was armed service.** Not tax collection, not political compliance, not a signature on a return: mounted men, maintained at the grantee's expense, delivered on demand.

That is the medieval European tenurial bargain in Islamic dress, and it carries the identical defect in the identical clause. An army assembled from the private followings of great men is an army that can at any moment become the army that removes the man who summoned it. Every emir of a hundred was, by the terms of his own grant, obliged to maintain a body of professional cavalry personally loyal to himself. The sultanate did not stumble into this; it wrote it down, standardised it, and tied it to a rank table. Everything the next modules describe about the permanent civil war at the top of this order was installed here, deliberately, as the price of having an army at all.

The survey as a weapon

The fractions had to be re-measured, and the re-measuring was the sharpest instrument of control the sultanate possessed.

The practice was old — the *rawk al-Nasiri* built on earlier survey traditions including the *rawk al-Afdali* and the *rawk al-Husami* — but the great instance is al-Nasir Muhammad's. Al-Qalqashandi dates its beginning to 716 AH / 1316, al-Maqrizi to 715 AH / 1315, and the difference should be left standing rather than resolved. It divided Egypt into twelve districts in the Lower country and nine in the Upper, cataloguing villages, cultivated *feddans* and productivity for the purpose of *kharaj* assessment, and its fiscal effect was blunt: it raised the sultan's direct share of *iqta'* revenues from four twenty-fourths to ten twenty-fourths of assessed yield.

A sultan more than doubled his own portion of Egypt by ordering a measurement. There was no confiscation to announce and no rival to defeat; the survey simply established what each parcel was worth, and the redistribution followed from the

arithmetic. It is worth pausing on the elegance of that, because it is the same technique that appears in colonial cadastral surveys six centuries later and for the same reason: **a re-measurement is a redistribution that presents itself as a correction.** Nobody has been dispossessed. The register has merely been brought up to date.

And the redistribution ran alongside a purge. On his restoration in 1310 al-Nasir Muhammad removed the emirs implicated in his earlier depositions, reshaping the military elite in favour of his own purchased mamluks, with the high commands increasingly reserved for his own men — which is the whole point. The *iqta'* could be taken back. That was its entire virtue as an instrument of control, and it is why a sultan who wanted to break a faction did not need to fight it. He needed only to reassign it.

The line nobody could cross

Every settlement has a boundary, and the framework asks what marks it — a bloodline, a manumission, a name in a book, a credential. Here it is stranger than any of those, and its strangeness explains a great deal about the order's later behaviour.

The marker was **foreign birth followed by purchase**. To be inside the settlement in its fullest sense a man had to have been born outside the *dar al-Islam*, bought as a boy, brought to Cairo, converted, trained, and manumitted by a master to whom he then owed a lifelong bond. Not born inside it: born outside and *bought* into it. This is a caste boundary that no achievement can cross, because the qualifying event happened in childhood, in another country, at somebody else's initiative, and cannot be acquired later by merit, marriage, conversion, learning, wealth or service.

Two groups sat on the wrong side of it, and their positions are quite different.

The first is the mamluks' own sons. Known collectively as the *awlad al-nas*, the sons of those who matter, many pursued careers in other endeavours; free Muslims by birth, unlike their fathers, they could not join the prestigious mamluk ranks — so that in this social pyramid the freeborn stood below those who had once been slaves — and in the army they formed the elite of the *halqa*, the non-mamluk cavalry, though an *awlad al-nas* might occasionally be raised to an emirate where a sultan needed to counterbalance a mamluk faction. The inversion is complete and deliberate: to have been born a free Muslim in Cairo, the son of a great emir, was a disqualification.

The second is the native Egyptian, who was outside it absolutely and permanently. He could become rich, learned, a chief judge, a chronicler read for centuries, a senior official of the fiscal bureaux the whole *iqta'* system depended on — and he could not become a mamluk, ever, by any route. There is an important consequence here that this

study will return to when it examines formation: because the caste boundary was made of purchase and foreign birth rather than of education or belief, an educated Egyptian posed no threat whatsoever to the settlement. He could not use his learning to enter it. That is precisely why the sultanate could afford to let native scholarship flourish as it did, and why so much of what survives of this period was written by men the regime had permanently excluded and had no reason to silence.

The man who could not move

Underneath the twenty-four parts stood the person on whose crop all of it rested, and his position in the settlement was the exact inverse of his rulers'.

The Mamluk elite held revocable claims and could be moved at will. The Egyptian peasant held nothing and could not be moved at all — or rather, could not move himself. The scholarly literature working from the Mamluk chancery and chronicle sources describes a peasantry effectively bound: the term *qinn*, serf, is used of them in Mamluk sources, and al-Nuwayri uses *fallahin al-qararriyya*, the peasants for ever, indicating that they were to remain in the village until death — and this applied to a peasant's sons as well as to himself. He could leave his village only with the permission of the *muqta'*, and then only for a stated time; otherwise the *muqta'* could have him brought back with the assistance of the authorities, and was indeed obliged to do so. The *muqta'* could punish his peasants with flogging and imprisonment and sometimes with death, and could decide civil suits among them where the parties preferred him to the qadi. The land tax itself ran at something in the region of a fifth of income from cultivable land, though rates and bases varied by period and the figure should be held loosely.

Set the two columns beside each other and the arrangement's logic is visible in a sentence. *The ruling caste could hold nothing permanently and could go anywhere; the producing population held nothing at all and could go nowhere.* One party was denied roots on purpose, to stop it becoming a nobility. The other was denied movement on purpose, to stop the revenue base walking away. Both were solutions to the same problem seen from opposite ends of the hierarchy, and the same officials administered both.

The exception that proves what they were doing

Here is the fact that establishes intent beyond argument, and it is easy to miss because it is an absence rather than a presence.

The Mamluks did not abolish private property in Egypt. *Milk* was privately owned land, ordinarily outside the military taxation system though its produce was taxed; there were no restrictions on selling or inheriting *milk*, since it lay outside the state systems and was registered as individually owned. Heritable freehold existed, was recognised in law, was administered by the courts, and was available to Egyptians.

So the non-heritability of the *iqta'* was not a limitation of Islamic law, or of Egyptian practice, or of what the period could conceive. Heritable property was right there, in the same country, under the same judges. The ruling caste simply did not take its own wealth in that form. It took the one form that could not be passed to a son — and it did so while presiding over a legal system that made heritable ownership available to the peasants' betters and the merchants and anyone else who could buy it.

An elite that could have owned the country and chose instead to rent it from itself, generation by generation, has told you exactly what it was afraid of. A landed family becomes a lineage; a lineage becomes a claim; a claim becomes a dynasty; and a dynasty in possession of Egypt is the end of the caste, because the next generation of purchased boys would arrive to find every position occupied by somebody's son. The refusal to own is the anti-heredity device in its purest form, and it is written into the property system rather than into a decree.

The sacred loophole

It did not hold, and the manner of its failure is the best thing in this module.

An institution existed that the sultan could not touch: the *waqf*, the pious endowment. A man endowed a mosque, a madrasa, a Sufi hospice, a hospital, a fountain, and settled property on it in perpetuity for its upkeep. Because the endowment was a religious act governed by the sacred law, it stood outside the confiscation and reassignment that governed everything the caste held — and because the sultanate's entire claim to rule rested on being the upholder of that law, attacking endowments meant attacking the foundation of its own legitimacy.

The instrument's use was noticed at the time by the sharpest observer available, who was living in Mamluk Cairo while it happened. Ibn Khaldun's account, as it is rendered in the standard translation, holds that the Mamluks, having been the sultan's slaves and

having grown prosperous after manumission, feared that the sultan would strip their children of what they left; so they founded religious institutions, endowed them richly, and installed their own descendants as administrators and beneficiaries of the endowments. Modern scholarship working directly from the surviving deeds in the Egyptian archives finds him borne out: the extant *waqf* deeds show numerous instances of Mamluk founders designating themselves, and after their deaths their descendants, as beneficiaries of the endowment's income. A teaching lecturer at MIT's architecture course puts the mechanism in one line for students looking at the buildings: amirs and dignitaries endowed charitable structures both for pious reasons and as a means of preserving some of the wealth the state had given them as *iqta'*, which would otherwise be taken from them.

Note that the piety and the calculation are not alternatives and should not be sorted into sincere and cynical. A man who builds a madrasa has built a madrasa; the scholars taught in it for centuries; the buildings are still standing in Cairo and are among the finest things the medieval world produced. He also arranged that his son would draw a salary administering it. Both are true and the second does not cancel the first.

The scale is what makes it a structural finding rather than an anecdote. By the early sixteenth century, endowment had converted something in the region of ten twenty-fourths of cultivable land into *waqf* property, and a separate calculation from the Ottoman-period records puts eleven *qirats* of Egyptian land in the *waqf* category when the Ottomans took the country. Call it something close to half. The caste that had refused to own an acre of Egypt in order to prevent inheritance had, over two and a half centuries, moved close to half the country into the one legal category the ruler could not reach, precisely so that it could inherit.

Reading the settlement against the framework

The card names three fictions a conqueror reaches for when he settles conquered wealth — declaring land vacant, declaring a grantee already to have owned what he is being given, declaring a collective holding partible — and observes that each converts a relation between persons into a transferable thing, so that the thing can be granted and the grantee bound. This case runs none of the three, and the reason is instructive enough to be added to the card as a fourth position.

Where the conquered order already held its wealth as a revocable claim rather than as a thing, no fiction is required, because the conversion the fiction performs has already been performed by somebody else. The Mamluks needed no

statute because five centuries of Islamic fiscal practice had already rendered Egypt as an assignable revenue stream measured in twenty-fourths. A study of such an order should stop hunting for a founding instrument and go to the register instead: the settlement will be recorded not in a charter but in a survey, and the political act will look like a measurement.

But the sharper finding runs the other way, and it is where this module's evidence compounds what the founding already showed. The ordinary direction of travel is relation into thing, and the ordinary reason is that a *thing* binds an elite — a man given something to lose acquires an interest in the order that can take it away. The Mamluks refused that direction deliberately. They held Egypt as pure relation, revocable at the apex, and they did it to their own class, knowing exactly what they were forgoing. The result was a settlement that bound the elite very tightly indeed to the *office* of the sultan — every emir depended on assignment and reassignment, so nobody could afford the machine to break — and hardly at all to any particular occupant of it, since a claim that can be cancelled by this sultan can be renewed by the next one. That is the exact configuration this study has to explain: continuous violence at the top, and not one attempt in two and a half centuries to change what the top *was*.

And the failure mode of the device yields the finding worth carrying forward. **An elite can be denied heritable property; it cannot be denied the wish to provide for its children, and it will convert whatever legal instrument lies beyond the ruler's reach into a channel of inheritance.** What made the *waqf* untouchable was that it was sacred — which is to say, the very belief that legitimated the sultanate was what protected the loophole through which the sultanate's central device was hollowed out. An order's robe and its structural weakness came from a single source, and neither could be adjusted without damaging the other. That pairing is worth watching for in every case: **where an order places something beyond its own reach in order to be believed, that is precisely where its elite will go to store what the order forbids it to keep.**

A note on sources. No original-language quotation appears in this module, and the one Arabic term rendered here — al-Nuwayri's *fallahin al-qarariyya*, "the peasants for ever" — is taken from a modern scholarly paper's transliteration and translation rather than from an edition, and is flagged accordingly; the same applies to *qinn*, *qirat*, *khass*, *milk*, *rawk* and *waqf*, which are standard terms as the literature gives them. Ibn Khaldun's explanation of why the Mamluks endowed religious foundations is paraphrased from the sense of Franz Rosenthal's translation of the *Muqaddimah* as quoted in the endowment scholarship, not quoted, and should be checked against Rosenthal directly

before it is relied on further; it is contemporary testimony, Ibn Khaldun having taught in Mamluk Cairo, but it is also a moralist's account of other men's motives and carries the usual discount. The structure of the *iqta'* — revenue assignment rather than ownership, non-heritable, revocable, tied to a service quota — and its Ayyubid and Buyid antecedents follow the standard accounts; Saladin's establishment of the system in Egypt from 1169 and his reallocation of Fatimid holdings after 1171, Qalawun's order for detailed provincial revenue lists, and Baybars' creation of the ranks of ten, forty and one hundred with the corresponding standardisation of assignments, are given as the reference literature gives them. Figures are contested and are given as such: the division of cultivated Egypt into twenty-four *qirats* with four held by the sultan before the *rawk al-Nasiri* and ten after is reported in the secondary literature and the pre-survey figure in particular should be treated as approximate; the survey's date is given by al-Qalqashandi as 716 AH/1316 and by al-Maqrizi as 715 AH/1315 and both are recorded here rather than reconciled; the *kharaj* rate of roughly a fifth of income from cultivable land is one reading and varied by period, crop and region; and the proportion of Egypt in *waqf* by the end of the sultanate is given variously as ten twenty-fourths and as eleven *qirats*, so "close to half" is the honest statement of it. The description of the peasantry as bound to the village, requiring the *muqta'*'s permission to leave and subject to his punishment, follows a modern study working from the Mamluk sources and should be weighed against the specialist literature, which is not unanimous on how completely the binding was enforced in practice as opposed to in the chancery manuals. Where this module has relied on encyclopaedic and general accounts for structure, the specialist work should be preferred and will be brought in as the study proceeds: David Ayalon on the military institution and its ranks, Sato Tsugitaka on the *iqta'* and the rural economy, Daisuke Igarashi on late Mamluk land tenure and finance, and the endowment scholarship working from the deeds held in the Egyptian National Archives and the Ministry of Awqaf.

MODULE 3

A ROBE OF HONOUR AND A DIPLOMA

Module 3 · The robe — a foreign slave caste legitimating itself entirely through the conquered population's own religion, and the powerless old man it paid to keep alive in Cairo for two and a half centuries because his word was worth more than any story it could have written itself

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Nothing was invented

The usual work of this module is to reconstruct the story a conquering power told about itself, identify the audience it was told to, and set it beside the taking it was covering. Here the first two steps produce an unexpected answer, and the third has almost nothing to work with.

The Mamluks composed no doctrine. They advanced no claim of descent, no myth of origin, no theory of racial or civilisational superiority, no account of themselves as bringers of anything. They did not describe the Egyptians as barbarians in need of improvement, nor themselves as a chosen instrument, nor their rule as the fulfilment of a prophecy. Search the record for the legitimating ideology of the Mamluk sultanate and what comes back is simply Sunni Islam — the religion of the country they ruled, in its ordinary form, held by the sultan and the peasant in the same terms.

There is a reason for this, and it goes to the strange mechanics of the caste. A mamluk was bought as a boy from the pagan or Christian steppe, converted immediately, and formed in Islam through the years of his barracks training. By the time he was a soldier he was a Muslim, and by the time he was an emir he had been one for most of his conscious life. The men who ruled Egypt did not adopt the religion of the ruled as an instrument on arrival. They had been made into it in childhood, in Cairo, by the country they went on to govern.

That produces a configuration this collection has not yet seen. There is no gap between the rulers' creed and the ruled's — not a narrowed gap, not a bridged one, but

none. Whatever else the sultanate had to manage, it never had to manage the problem of a foreign faith laid over a native one, because on the only axis that mattered to a thirteenth-century Egyptian the rulers were not foreign at all.

The office they could not manufacture

What they lacked was not belief. It was the specific instrument by which a Muslim ruler was pronounced lawful — and the Mongols had just destroyed it.

The mechanism was old and precise. Sovereignty in the Sunni world was marked by two things: the mention of a ruler's name in the Friday sermon in the mosques of his territories, and the striking of his name on the coinage. Both required a warrant, and the warrant came from the caliph, who conferred it by a diploma of investiture — the *taqlid*. The caliphate had held no serious power for three centuries, having been reduced to a licensing office by successive warlords, but the licence itself remained the thing that separated a ruler from a man with soldiers. Then in 1258 the Mongols sacked Baghdad and killed the caliph, and the Muslim world was left without the office that had endowed distant rulers with legitimacy by sending them writs of investiture.

Baybars' response is the central act of this module. When an Abbasid refugee, uncle of the murdered caliph, reached Cairo in 1261, Baybars had him proclaimed caliph as al-Mustansir II and received investiture as sultan from him. The proceeding was careful in a way that tells you what was at stake: the man's pedigree was assessed by a hand-picked committee of Cairene jurists, theologians and emirs before he was confirmed; Baybars then swore an oath of allegiance to him, undertaking to uphold and defend the faith, to rule justly according to the law, to serve as protector of Sunni orthodoxy and to wage war against the enemies of Islam; and in return the caliph invested him as sultan. The caliph declared the sultan's legitimate authority over Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Diyarbakir, the Hejaz and Yemen, and over any territory taken from the Crusaders or the Mongols. The record notes that Baybars received a robe of honour and a diploma; the investiture diploma was unveiled at a ceremony outside Cairo on 4 July 1261, combined with a further round of robing for the elite. Al-Mustansir's name was proclaimed in the sermon and struck on coins in Damascus, and the Syro-Egyptian sources describe public rejoicing at the return of a caliph after nearly four years without one.

He was dead within months, killed on an ill-judged expedition to retake Baghdad, and was replaced in 1262 by another Abbasid proclaimed as al-Hakim I, inaugurating the line of Cairo caliphs that lasted as long as the sultanate itself, until 1517.

What the expenditure proves

Now apply the sharpest test available. Force never pays for what it does not need. An apex holding uncontested violence that nonetheless bears a real and avoidable cost for legitimacy has demonstrated, by the expenditure alone, that the legitimacy mattered to somebody whose compliance mattered to him.

The Mamluks maintained a caliph in Cairo for two hundred and fifty-six years. They housed him, fed him, gave him a household and a place in every state ceremony, and asked of him nothing but documents. He commanded no troops, held no revenue assignment, appointed no officials and decided nothing. Al-Mustansir's successors continued in their official capacity as caliphs while holding virtually no power in the Mamluk government. There was never a moment in two and a half centuries when abolishing the office would have cost the sultanate a single soldier.

They kept it. And the market they were serving with it was not only domestic: the office remained relevant to other Muslim rulers into the fourteenth century, with the sultans of Delhi, the Muzaffarid Muhammad, the Jalayirid Ahmad and the Ottoman Bayezid I all seeking diplomas of investiture from the Cairo caliph or declaring nominal allegiance to him. A ruler in northern India wanted a piece of paper from a man in Cairo who could not have raised fifty horsemen — and the Mamluks were the ones who could supply it. The office they were paying to preserve was also an export.

What it cost them

The card warns that a power which occupies a legitimating position inherits the position's discipline along with its authority, and that a conqueror who takes the right without being able to take the duty finds the office hollowing under him from the day he sits down. That warning does not bite here in the way it does elsewhere, because these men genuinely had the duty. They were Muslims; they did defend the faith; they did fight the Mongols and the Franks; the warrant was real.

What bit instead was the constraint. A ruler who rules by upholding the sacred law is a ruler bound by the sacred law, and the Mamluks built the apparatus of that binding themselves.

From 1265, under Baybars, four chief judges served in Cairo, one from each of the four major Sunni schools, heading a judiciary in which the four schools stood in almost equal standing. The reform was worked outward: in 662/1264 Baybars had first appointed deputies to the chief Shafi'i judge of Egypt — al-Maqrizi remarks that this

had not been known in Egypt before — and in the following year, 663/1265, he established a chief judge for each of the four schools, each judging independently according to his own school throughout Egypt; the reform reached Damascus in Muharram 664 / October 1265, where three judges from the other schools were added to the Shafi'i chief judge, the Maliki and Hanbali appointees hesitating until an obligatory decree settled the matter. Baybars also established a House of Justice in Cairo in the early 1260s for the hearing of grievances.

Read that reform from the sultan's position and it does two things at once, which is why it lasted. It gave the population a judiciary in its own terms, staffed by its own scholars, applying its own law — which is a large part of why the sultanate could hold Egypt with so light a hand. And it gave the sultan four legally impeccable answers to any question instead of one. Yossef Rapoport has argued that the purpose of the quadruple structure was two-fold: to make the legal system uniform and at the same time flexible. A sacred rule is rigid for whoever hears it raw and supple for whoever controls the reframing, and a ruler with four schools of equal standing in his own capital has institutionalised the reframing. The constraint was real; it was also, by design, negotiable at the margin — and both halves of that sentence are the finding.

The cloth and the road

The other half of the robe was performed annually, in public, and it faced outward.

Saladin had taken the title Servant of the Two Noble Sanctuaries in 1171, but in the last years of Ayyubid rule no pilgrim caravan left Egypt or Syria for Mecca, the Crusader presence east of the Jordan having made the Sinai route intolerably dangerous; after the Mamluk sultanate was established, pilgrimage began again, and Baybars' victories over the Crusaders allowed the Egyptian route to reopen through Aqaba in 1266. Baybars also began the practice of sending the *kiswa*. The Egyptian caravan carried a ceremonial palanquin, empty of passengers, and with it the *kiswa* — the black silk cloth embroidered in gold and silver with Qur'anic verses that covered the Kaaba, a textile assertion of sovereignty draped annually over Islam's holiest structure. The caravan could take up to fifty days and required vast quantities of water and provisions for thousands of pilgrims, with troops guarding the procession; the honour of commanding it was also a heavy financial burden, since the commander bore most of the cost from his own wealth, some emirs seeking exemption and others borrowing to meet sums that ran to tens of thousands of dinars. Several Mamluk sultans, Baybars and Qalawun among them, used the title of Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries; the

sultan or his appointee led the caravans from Cairo and Damascus as commander of the pilgrimage, and from Qalawun the sultans monopolised the annual provision of the covering draped over the Kaaba.

Set this beside the caliph and the shape of the whole robe becomes clear. The caliph supplied the legal warrant, in writing, once. The pilgrimage supplied the demonstration, annually, in front of the entire Muslim world assembled in one place — the Egyptian road open because Egyptian soldiers had made it safe, the pilgrims fed and watered at Egyptian expense, and the covering of the Kaaba itself woven in Cairo and carrying the sultan's name. A slave from the Qipchak steppe put his name on the holiest object in Islam and paid for the privilege out of the revenue of the Nile.

And note what the annual expense was buying, because it identifies the audience precisely. The Egyptian peasant was not the target; he was held by the geography and by a faith he shared with his rulers, and needed no persuading. The audience for the cloth and the caravan was the Muslim world beyond the sultanate's reach — the world that contained rival claimants, potential allies, and the reputation on which a hard-pressed regime's diplomacy ran. The stone tells the same story: the mosques, madrasas, hospitals and mausolea that make Mamluk Cairo one of the glories of Islamic architecture were legitimacy in masonry, and they were also, as the endowment deeds show, the channel through which a caste forbidden to inherit provided for its sons. The same buildings did both jobs and there is no need to choose between the motives.

Did they believe it?

The card allows only a probabilistic test at the apex — look for deviation, for costly acts that make no sense as performance — and forbids the same test at the base. Applied here it returns an unusually clear answer.

These men held the office of the caliphate intact through two hundred and sixty-seven years of continuous factional murder, in which sultans were killed with some regularity and no faction ever suggested dispensing with it. They submitted to a refusal from that office in 1250 when they had every soldier in Egypt and it had none. They paid for the pilgrimage out of their own estates. They endowed religious foundations on a scale that reshaped a country's landholding. They built a judiciary that could and did rule against the powerful.

The decisive evidence, though, is not any of that. It is what the emirs did in 1412 when they had the throne in their hands.

The six months of the caliph-sultan

Sultan Faraj was brought down in 1412 by the Syria-based emirs. They could not take the throne themselves, and so had the caliph al-Musta'in installed as sultan; the caliph had the support of the non-Circassian mamluks and legitimacy with the local population. Six months later, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh eased him out of power after neutralising his chief rival and assumed the sultanate himself.

The detail is worth having exactly. Al-Musta'in accepted the sultanate on 7 May 1412, and reluctantly — he agreed only after obtaining an assurance from the Mamluks that he would keep the caliphate if he were deposed from the sultanate. He took up residence at the Cairo Citadel on 12 July. He then involved himself in the appointment and removal of ministers, and coins were struck in his name, signalling an intention to rule as sultan rather than to remain a figurehead. Alarmed by the prospect, Shaykh gradually isolated him, reducing him almost to a state prisoner. He was the only Cairo caliph ever to hold political power, and he held it for six months; every other caliph of that line, before and after, was a spiritual head with no temporal power whatever. He was deported to Alexandria, and the guarantee he had negotiated was worthless: he was deposed from the caliphate itself in 1414.

He was not the first caliph punished for touching politics. The pattern runs through the whole period: al-Mustakfi was exiled to Qus after crossing al-Nasir Muhammad; al-Mutawakkil was accused of treason and imprisoned by Barquq; al-Musta'in was deported after his brief spell as caliph-sultan. Caliphs were disciplined, exiled, imprisoned and deposed as individuals — and the office was never once attacked.

That distinction is the whole of it, and it is the finding this module exists to deliver.

Reading the robe against the framework

The card gives three provenances for a legitimating authority — a conqueror may forge one, redirect an existing one to point at himself, or destroy the incumbent and inherit the vacancy — and observes that redirecting is cheap because someone else has already done the work of earning the trust. This case sits outside all three, and the position is worth adding.

The Mamluks did not forge, redirect or inherit a robe. They joined the congregation. Converted as children into the religion of the country they would later rule, they arrived at power already inside the belief rather than standing behind it, and the consequence is a robe that costs nothing to maintain and cannot be taken off.

Nothing had to be manufactured, because the belief was already installed in the population by six centuries of formation; nothing had to be redirected, because the rulers were not pointing an existing trust at themselves from outside it; and nothing had to be destroyed, because they wanted the incumbent authority intact. This is the cheapest legitimating arrangement in the collection and also the most binding, and those are the same fact. A story you tell can be revised when it becomes inconvenient. A world you live in cannot.

That yields the prediction to test in the cases: **where a conquering elite is formed into the conquered population's faith before it takes power, expect no missionary effort, no counter-formation, no suppression of the native clergy, and a correspondingly heavy and permanent constraint on the ruler's freedom of action** — the clergy retained as licensors rather than managed as rivals, and the ruler genuinely unable to do what the law forbids, or able only through instruments (four schools, four rulings) that keep the constraint formally intact while loosening it in practice.

And the second finding, which is what 1412 was for. The framework already treats a separate legitimating office as an asset a newcomer can occupy. This case shows the asset has a condition attached that nobody states because everybody assumes it:

A legitimating office is worth exactly as much as it is powerless, and the men who depend on it will enforce that powerlessness violently. The Cairo caliphate was priceless while it could do nothing and lethal to its holder the moment it could do something. The instant al-Musta'in began appointing ministers and striking coins in his own name he stopped being a licensor and became a claimant, and he was isolated, deposed, deported and stripped of the caliphate — by the very faction that had put him there precisely because they could not legitimate themselves without him. Every caliph who reached for capacity was broken, and the office none of them was allowed to make powerful was the office none of them was ever permitted to lose.

So the puppet is not a decoration on this arrangement and not a cynical convenience. It is a load-bearing member whose load-bearing capacity depends on its being kept structurally weightless, and the study should expect the same wherever legitimacy has been vested in a seat separate from the sword: the office will be preserved with real expenditure, defended against abolition by the people it constrains, and attacked without mercy the moment it tries to act. The men who most need an authority to be genuine are also the men who cannot survive its being real.

A note on sources. No original-language quotation appears in this module. The terms rendered here — *taqlid*, *khutba*, *kiswa*, *mahmal*, *madhhab*, *qadi al-qudat*, *Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn*, *Dar al-'Adl* — are given as the standard literature transliterates them, and none is quoted from an edition. The oath Baybars is said to have sworn to al-Mustansir II in 1261 — to uphold and defend the faith, rule justly according to the law, protect Sunni orthodoxy and wage war on the enemies of Islam — is paraphrased from a modern narrative account and has not been verified against the text of the *taqlid* itself; the diploma remains the single most valuable unverified document for this study, being the exact instrument by which a purchased slave was made a lawful Islamic sovereign, and it should be chased in a scholarly edition before any of its wording is relied on. Al-Maqrizi's remark that deputy judgeships had not previously been known in Egypt is paraphrased from a modern article quoting the *Suluk* and is likewise unverified against the edition. The dating follows the standard and specialist accounts: the sack of Baghdad and death of al-Musta'sim in 1258; al-Mustansir II proclaimed in Cairo in June 1261 with the investiture ceremony on 4 July and his death later that year; al-Hakim I from 1262 and the Cairo line continuing to al-Mutawakkil III in 1517; the four chief judgeships from 663/1265, preceded by the appointment of deputies in 662/1264 and extended to Damascus in Muharram 664 / October 1265; the House of Justice in Cairo in the early 1260s; the reopening of the Egyptian pilgrimage route through Aqaba in 1266 and Baybars' inauguration of the practice of sending the covering for the Kaaba; and al-Musta'in's sultanate from 7 May to 6 November 1412, his residence at the Citadel from 12 July, his deportation to Alexandria and his deposition from the caliphate in 1414. Two discrepancies are left standing rather than resolved: sources differ on whether Faraj was killed on 23 or 28 May 1412 and on whether al-Musta'in's reign is best given as six or seven months. The association of the ceremonial palanquin with Shajar al-Durr belongs to a later tradition and is noted as such rather than asserted; what is well attested is that the practice became established under Baybars. The claim that the four-school judiciary produced a system both uniform and flexible is Yossef Rapoport's argument, paraphrased and credited, and the specialist literature on the reform — Jorgen Nielsen, Joseph Escovitz, Jonathan Berkey on Mamluk religious policy — should be preferred to the summaries used here. On the Cairo caliphate itself the recent monograph literature, including the study of the institution from 1261 to 1517 published by Edinburgh University Press, supersedes the encyclopaedic accounts drawn on above and should be worked in as the study proceeds.

MODULE 4

TWO BOYS AND ONE BOOK

Module 4 · Formation — a caste that installed its own belief with total intensity and withheld nothing from the people it ruled, because a boundary made of purchase and foreign birth could not be crossed by learning

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The arrival

A boy of perhaps ten or twelve, bought on the steppe or in the Caucasus and carried down the trade routes to Cairo, is brought by the merchant who owns him to the Citadel and presented to the sultan.

What happens next is described by a man who lived in that city and studied its monuments. Al-Maqrizi, writing in the early fifteenth century, gives an account of the barracks in the Citadel — built, he says, by al-Nasir Muhammad as quarters for the sultan's mamluks — and the account is detailed enough to reconstruct the process almost step by step. The trader presents the boy to the sultan, who sends him down to the barrack of his own origin-group and hands him over to a eunuch appointed for the purpose. The first thing he is taught is what he needs of the Qur'an. Each section of the barracks has a jurist who attends it every day, under whom the boys study the book of God, the skill of writing, instruction in the rules of the sacred law, and the practice of the prayers and recitations. It was a rule that the traders import none but young mamluks. When a boy reached adolescence the jurist began to teach him something of law and to have him read in it in an introductory way; and when he reached maturity he studied the kinds of war — archery, the lance games and the like — under a master who took each group in hand until it had learnt what was required.

Note the order of that curriculum, because it is the whole argument of this module in miniature. **The Qur'an first, then writing, then the law, then — years later, at physical maturity — weapons.** A body of men whose entire function was organised violence spent the first years of its formation being made into Muslims and being taught to read.

What was being installed

The framework asks every study to reconstruct the portrait of the good subject — the virtues, duties and self-understanding that formation was designed to produce — and here the medieval source states it outright, in the form of the conditions a man had to satisfy before he could be promoted.

Al-Maqrizi says a mamluk was moved up rank by rank into the commands, and did not reach that level unless his conduct had been refined, his manners multiplied, "the greatness of Islam and his people mingled in his heart", his archery strong, his lance-play excellent and his horsemanship trained. He adds, without apparent surprise, that among them were men who became learned jurists in rank, and literary poets, and expert calculators.

That is the specification: piety, manners, learning, and only then the four martial arts. And it was enforced by an apparatus of an intensity that is difficult to read at this distance. Restraints came from the eunuchs and the senior barracks officers, who tested each boy's condition, punished harshly, and interrogated him about his movements and his resting places; if a teacher of the Qur'an, or the eunuch he was subject to, or the barracks head who had authority over him found that he had sinned or broken a rule — religious or secular — he was confronted with a severe and painful punishment in proportion to the offence. The boys lived in the barracks and did not leave; a later sultan permitted them into the city by day but never to sleep elsewhere; another allowed them the bathhouse one day a week, in rotation, accompanied by the eunuchs.

Al-Maqrizi records one further practice that should be held with gravity rather than passed over. The head eunuch would be consulted at dawn about a boy who had washed from ritual impurity, and would send to establish the cause; and the boy's linen would be examined. A regime that inspects adolescents' bedding at first light and treats the wrong answer as a capital matter has extended its authority past behaviour into the body, and the men subjected to it were children who had been taken from their families and shipped across a continent. Explaining the logic of an institution is not excusing it, and the logic here — total control of the years in which a person's attachments are formed — is the same logic that makes the system work.

What was severed, and what grew back

Everything about the arrangement depended on a boy having nobody. The purchase removed his family, his tribe, his language, his religion and his country in a single transaction, and the barracks then supplied replacements for all of them.

The vocabulary of the caste is the evidence. A companion of the same barracks, the same training and the same manumission ceremony was a *khushdash*: the equivalent of a classmate or even a brother, to whom a mamluk owed fraternal devotion and support — a relationship that continued after manumission and enlistment and was sometimes reinforced by marriage alliance; the master was the *ustadh*, and a younger mamluk in the barracks was a kind of younger brother in need of protection, guidance and occasionally discipline. The senior instructors were addressed with a word meaning elder brother, the novices with one meaning younger brother, and the head of the barrack with a word meaning father.

This is the study's spine appearing in its plainest form. The device was built to produce capable men with no basis for a claim — no kin, no lineage, no standing. What the device actually produced was a manufactured kinship of extraordinary strength: a brotherhood of the barracks, a father in the master, a lifelong loyalty running sideways to one's cohort and upwards to one's purchaser. The formation system's real output was not a soldier. It was a household — and a household is a lineage substitute, and a lineage is exactly what the purchase had been designed to prevent. The tie the sultanate cut came back as an institution the sultanate itself built and paid for.

What was not withheld

Now turn the module round and look at the population.

The expectation the framework brings to a colonial or caste order is that formation will be withheld from the ruled, because forming them properly would mean admitting them, and admitting them is the one thing the settlement cannot do. Egypt under the Mamluks shows the opposite so completely that the inversion is the finding.

Nothing was withheld. Mamluk Cairo was one of the great educational concentrations of the medieval world, and it was built with the rulers' money: mosques, colleges of law, Sufi hospices and hospitals endowed in their hundreds by sultans and emirs, staffed by native scholars, teaching native students. The judiciary was staffed from that system and drawn from all four Sunni schools. The scholars it produced are the ones whose names still carry: Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, born in Cairo in

1372 and dying there in 1449, regarded as the foremost scholar of the fifteenth century across all fields of Islamic law, to whom scholars travelled from distant regions to study, and who granted certificates of learning to men who returned home as authorities in their own countries; al-Suyuti, born in Cairo in 1445 and dying there in 1505, whose output ran from Qur'anic commentary and hadith to grammar, rhetoric, history, mathematics and medicine; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, born in Cairo in 1323 and dying there in 1401; al-Maqrizi himself.

The reach extended past the sultanate's borders, and in one direction it is almost too neat. The eminent figures of early Ottoman scholarship — al-Jurjani, Molla Fenari, Shaykh Bedreddin, Haci Pasha — were educated in the particular atmosphere of the Shaykhuniyya college and hospice in Cairo, an institution that took in students and scholars arriving from Anatolia and Persia and gave them the setting to specialise in the rational sciences and Sufism; and the teaching they received there shaped the early Ottoman scholarly milieu. An emir's endowment in Cairo helped form the intellectual founders of the empire that would destroy the Mamluk sultanate in 1517.

Why nothing was withheld

The reason is structural and it is worth stating with precision, because it generalises.

An order withholds formation from the ruled when education is the route by which a ruled person could enter the elite. Where the ladder runs through the schoolroom, the schoolroom is the door, and the door must be kept narrow. The Mamluk elite had no such door. Entry required having been born a non-Muslim outside the abode of Islam, having been bought as a child, and having been manumitted by a master — a set of qualifications fixed in another country before the age of reason and unobtainable afterwards by any effort whatsoever. No amount of learning could make an Egyptian a mamluk. No amount of piety, wealth, service or brilliance could do it either.

So an educated Egyptian was not a threat to the settlement. He was an asset: he staffed the courts and the fiscal bureaux the whole revenue system depended on, he supplied the religious authority the sultanate's legitimacy required, and he could not, at any point, convert any of it into a claim on the throne. The most generous educational provision in the medieval Islamic world and the most rigidly closed ruling caste in it were not in tension. They were the same policy.

That gives the general rule this module contributes, and it is the sort of finding that predicts things: **formation is withheld exactly where the capture risk runs, and lavished where it does not.** The presence of open, well-funded education for a

subject population is therefore not evidence of benevolence, nor of an assimilating project, nor of a regime confident enough to share. It is evidence that the elite boundary is drawn on something education cannot reach.

The sons

The sharpest illustration of the boundary is what happened to the mamluks' own children.

The *awlad al-nas* were the sons of mamluks, free Muslims by birth unlike their fathers, and therefore could not join the ranks their fathers held — so that in this society the freeborn stood below those who had once been slaves. In the army they formed the elite of the non-mamluk cavalry. Many pursued careers in other endeavours entirely.

Those other endeavours were the law, scholarship, administration and the writing of history — the very fields the native Egyptians occupied. And one consequence deserves to be stated plainly because it changes how the surviving record should be read. Ibn Taghribirdi, born in Cairo in 1411, son of the emir Sayf al-Din Taghribirdi, and author of one of the great chronicles of Egypt, was one of these excluded sons. So a substantial part of what is known about the Mamluk sultanate was written by men the sultanate had barred from itself — close enough to the caste to know it intimately, permanently outside it, and channelled by that exclusion into precisely the profession that would preserve its memory. The order's historians were its own disinherited children.

The year

A reconstruction of the ceremonial calendar is where this module is thinnest, and it should be said rather than covered over: the modern accessible sources on Egyptian festivals describe the present, and a proper reconstruction of the Mamluk ritual year needs the specialist literature on popular religion and ceremonial in medieval Cairo, which has not been worked here.

What can be said with confidence is the shape. The year was scored by the Islamic calendar the population already lived by — the fast of Ramadan and the festival ending it, the festival of sacrifice, the Friday assembly in which the sultan's name was pronounced — and by two events the sultanate itself staged. One was the departure and return of the pilgrimage caravan, with its ceremonial palanquin and the covering

woven in Cairo for the Kaaba, paraded through the streets before being handed over. The other was the Nile.

The flood was the year's organising fact, and the state's relation to it was measured and public. Ibn Taghribirdi's chronicle runs year by year from the Muslim conquest to his own day and records, for every single year, the height of the Nile flood. An order whose whole revenue rested on a river's annual behaviour built its ceremonial year around the measuring of that river, and the chronicler who was barred from the ruling caste wrote the number down eight hundred times.

The sultan's own diagnosis

Al-Maqrizi ends his account of the barracks with a declension, and it is worth taking seriously for its structure even while discounting its tone.

When Barquq returned to the throne, he says, he allowed the mamluks to live in Cairo and to marry. So they came down from the barracks of the Citadel, married women of the city, lingered in idleness, and forgot those habits. Then under Faraj conditions were ruined: the payments of meat and the rest were cut, and each man was paid ten dirhams a day, so that their breakfasts became mainly cooked beans, they being unable to buy meat. He also reports Qalawun's own view of what he was building, in a saying that other kings raise walls and fortresses to be remembered by, and that his walls and fortresses were the mamluks themselves.

Discount the moralising. Every generation's chroniclers report that the young have gone soft, and a fifteenth-century Egyptian intellectual writing about the decline of a foreign military caste has several reasons to sharpen the contrast. But the *mechanism* al-Maqrizi identifies is not moral, it is structural, and it is precisely testable: the formation system worked by severing a boy's real attachments and supplying manufactured ones, and the moment the caste was permitted homes in the city and wives from the population, the manufactured attachments had to compete with real ones and lost. He is describing, from inside, the artificial kinship failing when actual kinship was readmitted. Later modules will test whether the political record bears that out.

Reading formation against the framework

The card holds that surveillance is the tell of a belief that never took, and that a caste order withholds formation from the ruled because forming them would mean admitting them. This case does not contradict either proposition; it locates them, and

the location turns out to be the general rule of which the colonial pattern is one instance.

Formation and surveillance both go where the capture risk runs, and the capture risk does not necessarily run downward. In this order it ran entirely inside the purchased caste — the only body of men in Egypt with the capacity and the standing to replace the centre — and that is exactly where the apparatus went: the barracks nobody left, the jurist every morning, the interrogation about a boy's movements, the punishment for a lapse in prayer, the eunuch at dawn. Meanwhile the population that supplied the revenue, being permanently ineligible for power on grounds no effort could alter, was educated freely and at the rulers' expense, in its own religion, by its own scholars, in colleges the rulers built. **An order that recruits its elite by a criterion no subject can acquire will educate its subjects generously; an order that recruits by merit must ration education, because there the schoolroom is the door.** That is the prediction to carry into the other cases, and it explains a pattern that otherwise looks like a difference in temperament between empires.

The second thing this module establishes compounds what the settlement already showed. A caste built by cutting men off from kin, and forbidden by its own rules to accumulate heritable property, generated within a single generation a full functional replacement for both: a brotherhood with a vocabulary of fathers and brothers, reinforced by marriage, surviving manumission, and strong enough to organise politics for two and a half centuries. The device stripped the tie and the institution regrew it. And when, at the end, the real tie was allowed back — homes in the city, wives from the population, sons underfoot — the manufactured one weakened, exactly as a contemporary observer said it did. **What a formation system installs is not loyalty to a person or an idea but a set of attachments, and attachments cannot be prevented, only redirected; an order that cuts them will find them reconstituted around whatever it puts in their place, and will discover that it has built the thing it was trying to abolish, in a form it now depends on.**

A note on sources. One exact quotation appears above, and it is from a modern translation: al-Maqrizi's statement of the conditions for promotion, that a man did not reach the commands unless "the greatness of Islam and his people mingled in his heart," is quoted from Hannah Barker's translation of the *Kitab al-khitat wa-al-athar fi Misr wa-al-Qahirah*, in Ayman Fu'ad Sayyid's edition, published under a Creative Commons licence by the Teaching Medieval Slavery and Captivity project.

Everything else drawn from that passage — the presentation of the boy by the trader, the eunuch, the sorting by origin-group, the daily jurist, the sequence of Qur'an, writing, law and only then weapons, the surveillance and punishments, the residence rules under successive sultans, Qalawun's saying about walls and fortresses, and the account of decline under Barquq and Faraj — is paraphrased from the same translation rather than quoted, and none of it has been checked against the Arabic. Al-Maqrizi (1354–1442) is a contemporary of the later period he describes and a retrospective source for the earlier one, and his account of the barracks' decline is a moralist's declension narrative and is flagged as such in the text; his figures, including the ten dirhams a day, should be treated as illustrative. The vocabulary of the caste bond — *khushdash*, *ustadh*, and the terms for senior and junior mamluks — follows a modern scholarly article and the general literature, with the affectionate glosses of "big brother," "little brother" and "father" taken from a popular account and flagged here as needing confirmation against Ayalon and the specialist work before being relied on. The training sequence, the role of the *mu'allim*, the four branches of the mounted arts and the approximate duration of the programme are given as the general accounts give them and vary by period; the practice changed substantially in the later sultanate, when adult mamluks were bought and permitted to live in the city, and that change is noted rather than smoothed over. Biographical dates for Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, al-Suyuti, Ibn al-Mulaqqin and Ibn Taghribirdi follow the standard reference accounts; Ibn Hajar's birth is given as 22 Sha'ban 773 with the corresponding February 1372 date rendered variously as the 18th or the 28th, and the discrepancy is left standing. The account of the Shaykhuniyya college's role in forming early Ottoman scholarship is paraphrased from a recent article and credited. The section on the ceremonial year is deliberately thin and is flagged as such: the modern sources available on Egyptian festivals describe present practice and are not evidence for the Mamluk period, and a proper reconstruction requires the specialist literature on popular religion and ceremonial in medieval Cairo — Boaz Shoshan, Jonathan Berkey, Doris Behrens-Abouseif — which should be worked in before this module's calendar is treated as complete. Ibn Taghribirdi's annual recording of the Nile flood height is reported from a secondary account of his chronicle.

MODULE 5

THE ONLY DOOR THE CROWD COULD PUSH

Module 5 · The cost column — why an Egyptian did not revolt against a caste of foreign slaves for two and a half centuries; the valley that made flight impossible, the gate where the state killed in public, and the licensed minority onto which everything that could not be aimed at the rulers was discharged

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Four columns

The question this module answers is deliberately narrow. Not whether the arrangement was just, but why, for a peasant in a Delta village or a weaver in Cairo, the ledger came out against defiance — year after year, generation after generation, under rulers who were foreigners, slaves by origin, and permanently unaccountable to him.

Four things go into that ledger: what he believed, what he got, what it cost him, and whether he could leave. In most cases in this collection the first column is thin and the answer lies in the third and fourth. Here the first column is full, and it is full in a way that changes the shape of everything else.

Belief

Start with the fact that makes this order cheap. The Egyptian and his rulers held the same religion, in the same form, on the same terms.

The sultan's name was proclaimed on Friday in mosques staffed by Egyptian scholars, following a law administered by Egyptian judges of the four Sunni schools, trained in colleges Egyptian emirs had endowed. The rulers guarded the holy cities, paid for the pilgrimage caravan, and reopened the road to Mecca that the last Ayyubid decades had closed. They were, in the terms the population itself used to assess a ruler, doing the job.

This is not a story the Mamluks told the Egyptians. It is the world both inhabited, and the difference matters enormously to the arithmetic. A subject asked to believe a foreign creed is being asked to do something, and can decline to do it privately while complying outwardly. A subject who already holds the creed his rulers hold is not being asked for anything. There was no gap for a hidden transcript to occupy — not because dissent was suppressed, but because on the axis that mattered most to a medieval Egyptian, there was nothing to dissent from.

Benefit

The benefit column was not sentimental, and its largest item had a date attached that every literate person in the country knew.

In 1258 the Mongols took Baghdad, killed the caliph, and destroyed the greatest city of the Islamic world. In 1260 they demanded Egypt's surrender, and the men in Cairo fought them and won. Whatever an Egyptian thought of being ruled by purchased Turks, he had an unusually concrete picture of the alternative, and it had happened to people he knew of, two years earlier, a few weeks' travel away.

Below that sat the ordinary goods of a functioning state. The pilgrimage road stayed open and guarded. The markets were regulated: the market inspector's jurisdiction covered public behaviour generally, and the men who held the post in Cairo and Fustat regulated markets and public spaces, moving through their districts under a duty to command right and forbid wrong, guided both by the sultan's directions and by the jurists' doctrine — penalising food adulteration and counterfeit coin, enforcing fair pricing, inspecting weights and measures, and acting against hoarding to prevent shortages. Grievances could be heard: there were four chief judges of four schools in Cairo and a court of complaints at the Citadel. Hospitals, water fountains, colleges and mosques were built and endowed on a scale that still defines the city.

And one benefit deserves particular notice because it is easy to miss and structurally large: **the Egyptian was not made to fight.** The campaigning was done by a purchased caste maintained at the state's expense, which absorbed the casualties of a two-and-a-half-century war against Mongols, Crusaders, Armenians and eventually Ottomans. The picture should not be drawn too cleanly — the non-mamluk cavalry included free men, Bedouin and Turkmen auxiliaries served, infantry was raised where needed, and the townspeople of Mansura fought the crusaders in their own streets in 1250 — but the standing army that carried the empire's wars was recruited abroad, not

conscripted from the villages. A peasantry that pays tax and keeps its sons has a materially different ledger from one that pays tax and buries them.

Cost

The cost was real, legible, and moderate by the standards of the period. Land tax ran at something like a fifth of income from cultivable land, with wide variation by period, crop and region; there were the ordinary market dues and levies; and there were the episodic exactions of a regime under fiscal strain, which grew markedly worse in the last century.

The heavier cost was not fiscal. It was that the man who took the tax also held the whip. The revenue-assignment holder was not a distant treasury but a local armed lord with jurisdiction: he could punish his peasants with flogging and imprisonment and sometimes with death, and could decide civil suits among them where the parties preferred him to the qadi. A peasant's dealings with the state were dealings with a soldier who had bought the right to his crop.

Exit

And here the ledger closes, twice over.

The first closure is the ground itself, described in an earlier part of this study and not worth restating at length except in its effect: a valley a few miles wide with absolute desert on both sides, no hills to disperse into, no forest, no frontier a family could reach on foot. When Qutuz's council weighed flight from the Mongols in 1260 it dismissed exile in a sentence, on the grounds that there was nowhere to go but North Africa across a killing desert. If the commanders of Egypt could not leave Egypt, a farmer with a donkey certainly could not.

The second closure was legal, and it was explicit. The Mamluk-era sources describe a peasantry bound to its village: the term for a serf is used of them, and al-Nuwayri calls them the peasants for ever, meaning that they were to stay in the village until death — and this applied to a man's sons as well as to himself. He could leave only with his lord's permission, and then only for a stated time; otherwise the lord could have him brought back with the help of the authorities, and was obliged to do so.

That last clause is the one to hold. Not permitted to retrieve him — *obliged* to. The system understood perfectly well that its revenue rested on people staying where they were, and it made the retrieval of a runaway a duty rather than an option.

The gate

Now the force that priced defection, and the striking thing about it is how little of it there was.

There was no register of the population, no internal passport, no political police, no network of informers pointed at the villages, no requirement that an Egyptian account for his movements. Everything a modern reader expects of an occupying caste ruling an alien majority is missing.

What existed instead was concentrated, theatrical and cheap. Bab Zuwayla, the southern gate of the walled city, served as a venue for public executions, and the heads of executed criminals or political enemies were displayed on spikes above it — the Mongol envoys' heads in 1260 among them. The fourteenth-century chronicler Ibn al-Furat describes the end of a notorious Cairo criminal known as the Water Buffalo, finally taken after a long career: he and his henchman were brought before the governor, the sultan ordered them nailed up, and they were fixed at the Zuwayla Gate, where they remained for days until they died — so that everyone entering the city passed them.

Read the economics of that. The state killed a very small number of people in the single place through which the largest possible number of people had to walk. A country with one city that matters, one gate everybody uses, and no route out of the valley does not need a police force. It needs a gate and a nail.

And the absence of the rest is itself evidence. Surveillance is what an order builds when its belief has not taken — and this order built an extraordinary surveillance apparatus, with daily inspection, interrogation about a man's movements, and punishment for a missed prayer. It built it inside the barracks, and pointed it at its own rulers. The Egyptian population, which vastly outnumbered the caste and was ethnically and linguistically alien to it, was watched hardly at all. There is no cleaner demonstration in this collection that the two dials are set independently, and that an order will spend its coercive capital exactly where it believes the danger is.

The second ledger

But the account so far describes one Egyptian and there were two, and the difference between them is this module's finding.

For the Coptic Christian and the Jew the columns ran differently, and they ran worse over time. Under the Mamluks the restrictions on protected non-Muslims were

enforced more heavily — prohibitions on building or repairing churches, on public display of crosses, on adopting Muslim dress or names — while Coptic prominence in fiscal administration, resting on inherited expertise in tax collection and accounting, bred resentment among the Muslim population, which saw them as exploitative intermediaries. The chronicler al-Ayni wrote that already under Qalawun "the dhimmīs had been in a state of extreme humiliation and degradation".

The record is of recurring, dated violence. Al-Maqrizi's survey records a series of eight assaults on the Copts in the early Mamluk period between 1250 and 1354, beginning in 1259, 1264 and 1279. Jews suffered in the dismissal of officials in 1293 under al-Ashraf Khalil, which followed riots in Cairo; and in 1301 the hostility broke into severe persecution, with riots in several Egyptian towns and many Christians and Jews compelled to accept Islam, including — according to a later Jewish-Egyptian chronicler — all the Jews of Bilbays. The trigger in 1293 was a single scene in the street: a well-dressed Copt was seen mounted on his horse leading a Muslim debtor behind him bound with a rope; the crowd killed him and went on to a general massacre with looting and the destruction of Coptic homes. In 1301 al-Nasir Muhammad dismissed thousands of Coptic officials to appease public discontent; churches were ordered closed that year, and in 1321 some sixty churches and many monasteries were destroyed. The fourteenth century saw a large wave of Coptic conversion to Islam, driven by intermittent persecution, the destruction of churches, and declining prospects of employment.

What the eight dismissals were for

Now the mechanism, and it is visible in a detail that is easy to read as mere hypocrisy and is in fact structural.

The state kept dismissing Coptic officials and kept taking them back. One account of the pattern notes that the sultans appeased popular resentment by the wholesale dismissal of Copts while in reality depending on them for the administration of the country, so that they were quietly reinstated afterwards — a subterfuge resorted to eight times. A government that genuinely wanted its fiscal bureaux purged would have purged them once. A government that performs the purge and reverses it, repeatedly, across a century, is doing something else.

What it is doing is discharging a pressure. The Muslim Egyptian population had real grievances — tax, prices, requisitions, the visible wealth of officials, the arbitrariness of an armed lord in the village — and those grievances had no legitimate object. They

could not be aimed at the sultan, who was the defender of the faith and guardian of the holy cities and whose name was in the Friday prayer. They could not be aimed at the caste, which held every weapon in the country. They could not be aimed at the law, which was the population's own. The one target that could be struck without striking the order was the licensed minority: prosperous, visible, disproportionately employed in exactly the tax-collecting functions that generated the grievance, and doctrinally marked as subordinate.

So the pressure went there, and the state let it — not, on the evidence, because it organised the riots, but because it did not prevent them, and because when the crowd had made its point the state supplied the ritual concession and then, needing the scribes it had dismissed, quietly undid it. The crowd got a demonstration that its anger had force. The order lost nothing it valued. And a population that had just watched a massacre in its own streets had been shown, without a word being said, exactly which direction anger was permitted to travel.

None of this should be softened by the explanation. Sixty churches were destroyed; people were killed in the street for their clothing and their horses; a religious community that had been the majority in Egypt within living historical memory was ground toward a minority partly by this pressure. Explaining a mechanism is not excusing it, and the mechanism's efficiency is precisely what made it terrible.

Reading the cost column against the framework

The card holds that where belief is thick, force sits at the margins, and that surveillance is the tell of a belief that never took. This case confirms both propositions in an unusually clean form, since the same order ran both settings simultaneously: an intense surveillance regime aimed at its own ruling caste, and almost none aimed at the population — which is what an order does when it knows, correctly, where the danger is. And it shows the two dials being set by geography as much as by policy, since a country with one valley, one city and one gate can price defection with a nail and a spike where a country with hills would need a garrison in every district.

The contribution, though, is about what happens to grievance that has nowhere legitimate to go.

A full belief column does not eliminate material grievance; it eliminates the grievance's legitimate object. The pressure remains, and it seeks the nearest target that can be struck without striking the order — and a licensed minority is precisely such a target. The disabilities of the protected non-Muslim in Mamluk

Egypt were not merely the residue of an old doctrine being enforced with unusual vigour. They defined a body that could absorb the anger of the majority at no cost to the arrangement, and the record of the period is largely a record of that absorption happening on a rough cycle, with the state supplying the formal concession each time and quietly reversing it once the streets had cleared.

That yields a diagnostic worth carrying to the other cases. **Read an order's repeated official concessions to popular anger against a minority as a discharge mechanism rather than as policy, and take the reversal as the tell.** A government that dismisses a class of officials because it has decided to do without them dismisses them once. A government that dismisses and reinstates the same class eight times in a century has told you that the dismissal was never about the officials — it was about the crowd, and it worked, and it was cheaper than any other answer to the same pressure.

The two findings fit together into the answer this module owes. The Egyptian did not revolt because he believed what his rulers believed, could see what the alternative to their rule had looked like in Baghdad, could not physically or legally leave, and would have been nailed to a gate; and because, when the ledger did press hard enough to move him, there was somewhere else for the anger to go, and the order made sure the door stood open.

A note on sources. One exact quotation appears above: al-Ayni's remark that under Qalawun the protected non-Muslims had been in a state of extreme humiliation and degradation, quoted here from a modern encyclopaedic account rendering the Arabic, not from an edition, and flagged accordingly. The account of the criminal known as the Water Buffalo and his crucifixion at Bab Zuwayla derives from Ibn al-Furat's fourteenth-century chronicle as translated and discussed in a modern article, and is paraphrased here rather than quoted; the same applies to al-Nuwayri's description of the peasantry as bound to the village until death, taken from a modern study's rendering. Al-Maqrizi's tally of eight assaults on the Copts between 1250 and 1354 is reported from a scholarly article on Coptic conversion and the Islamisation of Egypt; the specific years cited there begin 1259, 1264 and 1279, and the full list has not been reproduced. The dates and incidents of anti-dhimmi violence — the riots and dismissals of 1293 under al-Ashraf Khalil, the persecution and forced conversions of 1301 including the report concerning the Jews of Bilbays, al-Nasir Muhammad's dismissal of Coptic officials and the closure of churches in 1301, and the destruction of some sixty churches and many monasteries in 1321 — follow the encyclopaedic and confessional accounts consulted and should be checked against the specialist literature before the figures in particular are relied on; the report about Bilbays comes from an Ottoman-period Jewish-Egyptian chronicler writing long after the event and is doubly removed. The claim that the sultans dismissed and reinstated Coptic officials eight times comes from a Coptic church history and is the load-bearing fact of this module's central argument; it should be verified against the scholarly literature, and if the

number proves wrong the argument stands or falls on the pattern rather than the count. The scale and drivers of fourteenth-century Coptic conversion are contested in the field and the account given here is deliberately unquantified. On the market inspector, Kristen Stilt's work on the *muhtasib* in early Mamluk Cairo and Fustat is the authority and is paraphrased and credited. The land tax figure of roughly a fifth is one reading and varied widely. The statement that the native population was not systematically conscripted is qualified in the text and should be held loosely: free troops served in the non-mamluk cavalry, Bedouin and Turkmen auxiliaries were used, infantry was raised, and civilians fought at Mansura in 1250. The specialist literature that should be worked in before this module is treated as settled includes Stilt on law in action, Sato Tsugitaka on the rural economy and the peasantry, and the Mamluk Studies Review scholarship on Coptic conversion and on urban violence in Cairo and Damascus.

MODULE 6

THE RIVER PAID FOR THE STEPPE

Module 6 · Extraction — three revenue streams and one destination; how the tax on an Egyptian's grain crossed the Mediterranean in Christian ships to buy a boy on the Black Sea, and what happened when a sultanate short of money began eating the trade it lived on

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Three streams

Three kinds of money reached the Citadel, and they behaved so differently that treating them as one revenue is the quickest way to misread the whole order.

The first came out of the ground: the land tax on Egypt's cultivated valley, assessed by survey, assigned in twenty-fourths to the sultan and his emirs, and collected in the village by the assignment-holder himself. It ran at something in the region of a fifth of the yield from cultivable land, varying by period, crop and region, and it was the foundation — predictable, tied to the flood, and constrained at the top by what a peasant would bear before he stopped producing or fled.

The second came from goods that were merely passing through. Egypt sat across the only workable route between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, and the sultanate taxed what crossed it. Pepper, spices, silks and dyes came up the Red Sea, over the desert or up the Nile, and out through Alexandria into Venetian and Genoese holds. Neither end of that trade was Egyptian. The revenue was a toll on other people's commerce, collected by right of standing in the way.

The third stream appeared late and is the tell of a state in trouble: the sultanate stopped taxing the trade and began *being* the trade.

What the second stream really was

The transit trade deserves particular attention because it is structurally unlike anything else in this study, and because the sultanate's fate turned on it.

The carrying was done substantially by a merchant network known as the Karimi — Muslim traders operating between the Indian Ocean ports and Egypt, whose wealth was proverbial and whose organisation has been studied since the mid-twentieth century without the term's exact meaning ever being fully settled. They moved the goods; the state took its percentage at the ports and the customs houses; and neither the producer in Malabar nor the consumer in Bruges had any say in the rate.

Notice what that does to the arithmetic of extraction. A land tax is disciplined by the man who pays it: press too hard and he starves, flees, or rises, and the extractor eases off because he needs him producing next year. A transit toll has no such governor, because the person paying is not the person ruled. He is a foreign merchant with ships, and his only sanction is to go somewhere else. The constraint on a transit rent is not the revolt threshold. It is the existence of an alternative route.

For two centuries there was no alternative route worth taking, and so the Mamluks could tax the passage almost at will.

What the money bought

Now the expenditure, which is where the study's spine reappears.

The single indispensable purchase of the Mamluk state was people. The ruling caste did not reproduce itself; by rule and by custom its members' sons were excluded from its ranks, so every generation had to be bought again — foreign boys, non-Muslim at purchase, shipped in from outside the abode of Islam. That is not a subsidiary expense. It is the state buying its own existence, annually, on a foreign market.

The market was the Black Sea, and the arrangements that made it work were among the most consequential diplomacy of the age. In the 1260s the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus granted commercial privileges in the Black Sea to the rulers of Genoa, Venice and the Mamluk sultanate; on the basis of those privileges Mediterranean merchants settled in the Black Sea and exported goods including slaves, and the traffic continued until 1475, when Ottoman forces took Caffa, Genoa's chief colony in the Crimea. A formal agreement with Michael VIII allowed the merchants and ambassadors sent by the sultan or by the khan of the Golden Horde to cross Byzantine territory and pass the Bosphorus, and the negotiations conducted at Cairo between Baybars, Berke, Michael VIII and the Genoese produced a direct route between Alexandria and the lower Volga by way of Constantinople and the Crimea — a journey of two to two and a half months. Caffa was granted to the Genoese in 1266.

The men who carried the cargo were Italians, and one of them is worth naming because he compresses the whole absurdity into a single career. Segurano Salvaygo was recorded in Egypt in 1303–4 presenting gifts to al-Nasir Muhammad, and a Mamluk sultan is said to have called him brother; his ships flew the sultan's banner, and he did business with European merchants on the Mamluks' behalf in order to get round the papal embargo that forbade Europeans to trade with Egypt. He and other members of his family were active at Caffa, then a centre of the slave trade, on which the Mamluks depended to replenish their army.

Set the pieces in order and the circuit closes. An Egyptian farmer's grain is taxed by an armed lord holding a revenue assignment. The money goes up to the Citadel. It is paid to merchants — many of them Christians from the very powers still nominally committed to crusade — who sail to the Crimea and buy boys captured or sold by the Mongols of the Golden Horde. The boys come to Cairo, spend years in the barracks learning the Qur'an and then the bow, are freed, are given revenue assignments of their own, and ride out to hold Egypt and to take Acre from the crusaders in 1291. **The harvest pays for the army, and the army secures the harvest, and the link between them runs through the hands of the enemy.**

The line that could be cut

That circuit has a property no other order in this collection shares, and it is worth stating starkly because it governs the ending.

Every state must reproduce its coercive capacity. Nearly all of them do it domestically: they conscript, levy, or raise their soldiers from the population they already rule. The Mamluk sultanate could not. Its floor was an *import*, and the supply line ran across seas it did not command, through a strait held by Byzantium, from a market in the Crimea held by Genoa and licensed by the Golden Horde, carrying human beings sold by the Mongols — the same Mongols whose Persian branch was the sultanate's principal enemy.

This reframes a great deal of Mamluk foreign policy as procurement. The alliance with the Golden Horde against the Ilkhanate; the treaty with Michael VIII for passage of the straits; the persistent cultivation of Genoa in the teeth of papal prohibition; the readiness to find alternative land routes when the sea route was threatened — by al-Nasir Muhammad's time the Bosphorus was no longer the only access, the Anatolian and Syrian land routes being passable, and in 1321 Mamluk troops occupied Ayas in Cilician Armenia, one of the region's great commercial hubs — all of it is the

behaviour of a power keeping open the road along which its own existence travelled. And the sultanate's enemies understood it: the flow of recruits was a target, and disrupting it was strategy.

When the flow thinned

The system worked for as long as three things held: the valley produced, the trade passed, and the boys arrived. In the fifteenth century all three came under strain at once, and the state's response is the most instructive economic episode in its history.

Plague had cut the population and therefore the land revenue; the assignments were yielding less; the treasury was short. Al-Ashraf Barsbay's answer was to stop taxing the transit trade and to take it. Facing deficits worsened by post-plague disruption and earlier mismanagement, he imposed state monopolies on key commodities, particularly spices and pepper moving through Red Sea ports such as Jeddah; edicts in the 1420s and 1430s compelled the Karimi merchants, who dominated the Indian Ocean trade, to sell their cargoes exclusively to government agents at fixed prices, routing the commerce through Mamluk-controlled harbours and cutting out private intermediaries. The measures initially doubled customs revenues from the monopolised goods. Measures taken between 1425 and 1427 secured the sultanate's control of the Red Sea route previously in Karimi hands, and Barsbay ensured that the ten per cent duty on Indian imports was carried to Cairo rather than retained at Mecca by appointing a personal representative and customs inspector at Jeddah, who went down each year when the dhows arrived from India to supervise the unloading, collect the duty, and bring the revenue back. He also reformed the coinage: in 1425 he minted a high-purity gold *ashrafi* of about 3.45 grams, standardised to rival the Venetian ducat, against the debasement of the earlier Circassian period.

And then the bill. The interventions provoked resistance: merchants smuggled to evade the edicts, which eroded commercial vitality over the longer term by alienating the Karimi networks and encouraging black-market alternatives rather than sustained investment in licit trade; and while the monopoly profits supplemented land revenues weakened by demographic decline, they accelerated capital flight into Ottoman and eventually Portuguese circuits, undermining Egypt's role as the entrepôt.

The scholarship is careful not to make Barsbay a fool, and this study should be too: the fifteenth-century Red Sea policy has been read as genuine imperial strategy as much as desperation, neither purely opportunistic nor wholly destructive, an attempt to secure imperial power in the region despite serious economic difficulty. But the

structural point stands whatever the intent. A state that had been taking a percentage of somebody else's trade became the trade's compulsory counterparty, and the merchants who had no vote and no army did the only thing available to them.

Where the constraint actually sat

This is the module's analytical centre, and it is worth stating slowly because it revises how extraction should be read.

The framework's usual question is where a rate sits relative to the revolt threshold, and which dials — the credibility of punishment, the availability of exit — hold it there. That question works perfectly for the land tax. The Egyptian peasant could not leave and could not resist, so the rate could be pressed toward the bone, and largely was.

It does not work at all for the transit revenue, because **the party paying was not the party ruled.** No amount of force at Bab Zuwayla disciplines a Gujarati shipowner. The Mamluks had total coercive dominance over everyone within their territory and none whatever over the people supplying most of their second revenue stream — and those people held the one power the Egyptian peasant did not: they could go somewhere else.

So a transit rent has no equilibrium set against a revolt threshold. It has one set against a *routing decision*, and the discipline arrives not as rebellion but as diversion. Which is exactly what the record shows: the punishment for Barsbay's monopolies was not a rising in Cairo. It was smuggling, the decay of the Karimi networks, and capital moving into other circuits — a slow, silent, entirely non-violent sanction that no garrison could prevent and that the state's own coercive strength was structurally unable to touch.

Reading extraction against the framework

The card divides extraction into a flow, tunable against a revolt threshold and needing the producer alive, and a stock — the land itself — which has no rate and tends to elimination. This case requires a third object, and the third object behaves like neither.

Where the thing extracted is a transit rent, the constraint is not the revolt threshold but the alternative route, and the sanction is diversion rather than rebellion. That has several consequences worth carrying. A ruler drawing much of his revenue from goods passing through will look, on the domestic evidence, unusually secure — his subjects are quiet, his force is uncontested, no rising is brewing — while

the stream that actually funds him drains away for reasons no domestic instrument can address. The tell of an order that has crossed the line is therefore not disorder but silence: falling receipts with no visible cause, smuggling, the quiet relocation of merchant capital, an entrepôt going out of fashion. And the temptation is structurally strongest at exactly the wrong moment, because a state whose *land* revenue is collapsing will reach for the stream it can seize by decree, and seizing it is what makes it leave.

The second finding compounds what the founding and the settlement already established, and it is what makes this order singular.

This state's floor was an import, and so its most vital supply line ran through territory it did not hold, across seas it did not command, in the ships of powers it was at war with. No other case here has to buy its army abroad every generation. It converts what would elsewhere be foreign policy into procurement — the Golden Horde alliance, the Bosphorus treaty, the courting of Genoa against the Pope's embargo, the seizure of an Armenian port — and it means that the arrangement's central device, the purchase that produced a capable class with no local standing, was also the point at which the whole thing could be cut by someone else's hand. **An elite that reproduces itself by purchase has outsourced its own continuity to a market it does not control**, and the day that market changes owners is the day the caste stops being replaced. Caffa fell to the Ottomans in 1475. Cairo fell to the Ottomans in 1517.

A note on sources. No original-language quotation appears in this module and no Arabic has been verified against an edition. The Black Sea arrangements — Michael VIII's grant of commercial privileges to Genoa, Venice and the Mamluks in the 1260s, the grant of Caffa to the Genoese in 1266, the passage agreement covering the sultan's and the khan's merchants and ambassadors, the Alexandria-to-lower-Volga route of two to two and a half months, and the continuation of the traffic until the Ottoman capture of Caffa in 1475 — are paraphrased from Hannah Barker's study of the Mediterranean trade in Black Sea slaves and from scholarly work on the Golden Horde and the Mamluks, and are credited rather than quoted. The career of Segurano Salvaygo, including the ships flying the sultan's banner, the evasion of the papal embargo and the report that a sultan called him brother, follows a modern article summarising B. Z. Kedar's work and should be checked against Kedar directly. The occupation of Ayas in 1321 and the availability of the Anatolian and Syrian land routes under al-Nasir Muhammad come from the same Golden Horde scholarship. Barsbay's measures are the weakest-sourced material here and are flagged accordingly: the monopoly edicts of the 1420s and 1430s compelling sale to government agents at fixed prices, the initial doubling of customs receipts, the minting of the *ashrafi* at about 3.45 grams in 1425, and the consequences in

smuggling and capital flight are taken from an encyclopaedic summary; the Red Sea measures of 1425–27 and the appointment of a customs inspector at Jeddah come from an amateur historical blog, as does the striking claim that the ten per cent duty there rose from around thirty thousand dinars to over two hundred thousand within about twenty-five years — that figure should be treated as unverified and should not be relied on until checked, and the argument above does not depend on it. The scholarly framing of Barsbay's Red Sea policy as strategy as well as exigency is paraphrased from an open-access chapter on the fifteenth-century spice trade and the Mamluk sultanate. The land tax figure of roughly a fifth is one reading and varied widely by period, crop and region. On the Karimi merchants the foundational studies are Walter Fischel's and Gaston Wiet's, with Tsugitaka Sato's work on slave traders and Karimi merchants being the obvious next source to bring in; the term's precise meaning has been contested since the 1950s and is not settled here. The specialist literature that should be worked in before this module is treated as complete includes Barker on the slave trade, Sato on the rural economy and the merchants, and the Mamluk Studies Review scholarship on fifteenth-century fiscal crisis and monetary policy.

MODULE 7

THE MURDERS WERE NOT THE SECRET

Module 7 · Information and suppression — an order that let its assassinations be written down in detail and imprisoned its greatest scholar over a ruling on divorce; where the seam actually ran, and whose hand was on it

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

A prediction that fails

The expectation this study carried into the module was reasonable and it turns out to be wrong, which makes it worth stating before it is dismantled.

In an order that answers to a distant metropole, the management of information has an obvious shape: what is done on the ground must be kept from the people at home whose belief funds and mans the enterprise, and the whole art of government becomes holding those two ends apart. This sultanate had no metropole. The men who ruled were the men who fought, the treasury was in the same citadel as the barracks, and there was no distant public whose conscience had to be managed. So the prediction was that the concealment would face inward — toward the Egyptian population and its scholars — and would be run through religion.

The record does not support it. What the Mamluk order concealed was not what it did, and the apparatus that did the concealing was not, in the main, the sultan's.

What they let be written

Begin with the candour, because it is genuinely startling.

The Mamluk period produced one of the richest chronicle traditions in the pre-modern world — al-Nuwayri, al-Maqrizi, Ibn Taghribirdi, Ibn Iyas, and others — and those chronicles record the regime's internal violence in detail. Sultans murdered on the road from a victory. Emirs killed by their comrades. A queen beaten to death.

Children seated on the throne as fronts and removed when convenient. Factional war in the streets of Cairo. None of it is hidden, elided, or rendered in euphemism.

Nor is the description of the caste's own formation sanitised. The account of the barracks written by al-Maqrizi in the early fifteenth century — a description of how the sultan's mamluks were housed, taught and disciplined — includes the punishments, the interrogation of boys about their movements and their sleeping places, and the dawn inspection of a boy's linen for evidence of sexual activity. It also includes a flat statement that the system had decayed, that the mamluks had been let out of the Citadel to live in the city and marry, that they had grown idle and forgotten their habits, and that their rations had fallen to boiled beans. A regime with a functioning censorship does not permit that paragraph to be written about its own army by a man living in its capital.

One of the chroniclers was himself a mamluk: Baybars al-Mansuri, a slave soldier in Qalawun's service, wrote a chronicle of Mamluk history — and his secretary and probable editor was Ibn Kabar, a Coptic Christian who later took orders as a priest and had to flee the persecution of 1321. The caste's own history was written down with the help of a member of the minority the caste's subjects periodically massacred.

Why they could afford it

Three reasons, and the third is the one that generalises.

First, the political facts were not load-bearing. The sultanate's claim to rule did not rest on the proposition that its own succession was lawful or orderly. It rested on the sultan upholding the sacred law, defending the frontier, guarding the holy cities, and being named in the Friday prayer under a caliph's warrant. A chronicle recording that emirs killed each other for the throne left every one of those propositions untouched. Nobody in Egypt believed the succession was peaceful, and nobody needed to. A regime only has to suppress the facts that would falsify the specific thing it is believed for.

Second, the men writing were structurally harmless. The chroniclers were scholars, judges, chancery officials, and the excluded sons of mamluks — precisely the classes barred by birth and purchase from ever holding power. A record kept by people who cannot use it against you is a record you can afford to let them keep. This is the caste boundary paying an unexpected dividend: the same rule that made an educated Egyptian no threat to the throne made an accurate Egyptian historian no threat either.

Third, and most concretely: the men described could not read it. The ruling caste kept its own language. Kipchak Turkic was the primary tongue of the Mamluk military elite and ruling class from the mid-thirteenth to the early sixteenth century, functioning both as a barrier language preserving the distinct identity of the Turkic-speaking Mamluks and as a contact language across a multi-ethnic army and court. Mamluk rulers were often monolingual Turkic speakers, and dictionaries were compiled to enable communication between the Arabic-speaking population of the empire and its rulers. Of the founder himself it is said plainly that Baybars was not familiar with the Arabic language or with Islamic learning, and had to prove his capacity to run the state as an Islamic ruler.

The qualification matters and should be given its weight: this was not a sealed wall. Turkic-Arabic bilingualism spread, government officials and judicial circles spoke at least two languages, and the sons of mamluks increasingly used Arabic — which was precisely what allowed them to enter the religious establishment through its educational system — while ordinary Egyptians spoke the Arabic dialect. But the founding generation's condition is real and its consequence is exact. **The record of this order was kept, in Arabic, by the people it excluded, for an audience that did not include the men it described.**

The version they did produce

None of which means the sultanate was indifferent to its own portrayal. It produced an official account, and the official account is the module's other half.

Ibn Abd al-Zahir, a chancery scribe, poet and historian who lived and died in Cairo between 1223 and 1293, wrote biographies of Baybars, Qalawun and al-Ashraf Khalil. He was not an observer at a distance: he was Baybars' private secretary, and in his *al-Rawd al-Zahir* he found moral justification for each of his master's actions. Modern scholarship reads the result as one would expect — an official biography presenting Baybars as a heroic and pious ruler, in a way that overshadows his brutality and despotism.

So the asymmetry this project exists to measure is available here in an unusually clean form: the sultan's own secretary's account of an event, and a later chronicler's account of the same event, both in Arabic, both surviving, both readable side by side. What is missing is the thing a study of a modern order would expect between them — an apparatus that suppressed the second in favour of the first. The official version was *added* to the record. It did not replace it.

Where the prison actually was

And yet men did go to prison in Mamluk Egypt for what they said. The most famous of them shows exactly where the line ran.

Ibn Taymiyya was born at Harran in 1263 and his family fled the Mongols to Damascus at the end of that decade; he took over his father's teaching post at the Sukkariyya madrasa in 1284. He was, by any measure, useful to the state. When the Ilkhanid Mongols converted to Islam in 1295 and then invaded Syria three times between 1299 and 1303, the conversion raised the problem of Muslims fighting Muslims, and Ibn Taymiyya argued that the Mamluks were obliged to defend Islam against them because the Mongols did not adhere to all its laws and acted from their own interests rather than religion's. Disturbed by reports that troops were refusing to fight newly converted Mongols, the Mamluks enlisted his help, and over the following months he issued three rulings on the Ilkhanids, the second and most important running to thirty-five pages and addressing the validity of their practice of Islam. He was also personally present in the Mongol wars.

Then look at what he was imprisoned for. He was charged with ascribing a body to God, interrogated and released. In 1305 he was sent to Cairo and held at the citadel there, and several more imprisonments followed — one account puts the Cairo detention at eighteen months from 1306, and the discrepancy should stand. From August 1320 to February 1321 he was imprisoned on orders from Cairo in the citadel of Damascus for supporting a doctrine that would restrict the ease with which a man could divorce his wife. He was interned again in the citadel of Damascus in Sha'ban 726 / July 1326, over rulings including the one on triple repudiation and one on visiting the Prophet's tomb, and he died there in September 1328, attended by his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya; his funeral was attended by a reported hundred thousand people or more.

Set the two lists beside each other. An order that permitted the written record of its assassinations, usurpations, child-puppets and barracks abuses imprisoned its most formidable scholar, repeatedly, over divorce law, grave-visiting, and the divine attributes.

Whose hand was on it

The obvious reading is that the sultanate feared a charismatic preacher. The evidence points elsewhere, and this is the module's finding.

The initiative came from other scholars. Rival and influential ulama disagreed with his opinions, which resulted in legal prosecution by the local Mamluk authorities; his old foes succeeded once again in convincing the authorities to bring him to trial and imprison him on renewed charges of doctrinal deviation; and his popular appeal had evidently caused great distress to the traditional scholarly elite, which feared the weakening of its own authority. The judges of the four schools of Egypt ordered his imprisonment — the four-school judiciary, built for uniformity with flexibility, functioning as a four-way market in accusations against a man none of the four could out-argue. The Maliki judge Ibn Makhluf ruled him guilty of unbelief; and the trial was held in the house of Ibn Taymiyya's own Mamluk ally, the emir Aq Sunqur al-Salari, a known opponent of Sultan al-Nasir, which indicates that the case was entangled in a factional struggle inside the state.

And the sentence itself was informational rather than merely custodial. The Egyptian authorities ordered a public declaration in Damascus denouncing his theological deviations; announcements were made throughout the Levant warning people against following his doctrine; and his followers were dismissed from their judicial and teaching positions and barred from leadership and social roles, in order to weaken his intellectual and political influence.

That is a complete suppression apparatus — trial, conviction, imprisonment, public proclamation across a region, purge of a network from its offices — and it was operated by the interpreter class, with the state supplying the force.

What this says about a borrowed robe

Now put the two halves together, because they explain each other.

An order suppresses information about the thing its legitimacy actually rests on. The Mamluk sultanate's legitimacy did not rest on its own conduct — everyone knew what its conduct was, and it did not matter, because the claim was never that these men were peaceful or lawfully descended. The claim was that they upheld the sacred law and defended the faith. So the sacred law is where the sensitivity lived, and the sacred law is where the prison was.

But the sultanate did not own the sacred law. It had adopted, whole, a religion the population already held, administered by scholars the population already trusted, in a language most of the early sultans could not read. It had no doctrine of its own, no clerical machinery of its own, and no capacity whatever to adjudicate a dispute about the divine attributes. What it had was a citadel and the men to fill it. So when a

doctrinal quarrel needed settling, the ruling was produced by the scholars and the force was produced by the state — and a scholar's enemies could reach the citadel through the courts, provided they could assemble a judgment.

This is the price of the arrangement seen from a new angle. A ruler who has borrowed his legitimacy does not own the loom. He is obliged to enforce findings he cannot evaluate, at the request of a class he did not create and cannot replace, in a field where his own opinion carries no weight at all. And where the class is internally divided — four schools, each with a chief judge, each with rivals — the enforcement becomes available to whoever inside it can win a vote.

Reading information against the framework

The card holds that the trusted-information position grows by default and can only be occupied, crowded or captured, and that the liberty variable is whether it is held by one hand or by many competing hands that check one another. This case supplies an instance of *crowded* that behaves in an unexpected way, and two findings follow.

First: an order conceals what its legitimacy rests on, not what is discreditable to it. These are usually the same thing, which is why the distinction is easy to miss; here they came apart completely, and the result is a regime that let its murders be recorded in detail and jailed a man over a fatwa on divorce. So the diagnostic for any case is not "what would embarrass these rulers" but "which specific proposition are they believed *for*" — and the censorship will be found guarding that proposition and nothing else. The corollary is useful in both directions: **where a regime's own crimes circulate freely, do not conclude that it is confident or tolerant; conclude that its crimes are not load-bearing, and go looking for whatever is.**

Second: where the robe is borrowed, the suppression apparatus belongs to the lender. The tell is the identity of the victims and the source of the accusations. A ruler enforcing his own legitimacy jails dissidents — men who deny his right to rule. A ruler enforcing a borrowed legitimacy jails heretics, on charges brought by clerics, in disputes he could not adjudicate and often could not follow, because the thing he must protect is not his own reputation but the coherence of the doctrine he rents. Ibn Taymiyya never denied that the Mamluks should rule; he armed them with the ruling that let their soldiers fight Muslim Mongols; and he died in their citadel for an opinion about the divine attributes and the law of divorce.

That is the constraint of a borrowed robe appearing as a mechanism rather than as a principle. The sultan gets a population that requires no persuading and a legitimacy he

did not have to build. What he gives up is control of the one thing he is being judged by — and the men who hold it can, at the margin, point his prison wherever their own quarrels require. The crowding that the framework identifies as the whole of the available liberty here produced something more ambiguous: not a check on the ruler by competing interpreters, but a competition among interpreters conducted with the ruler's hands.

A note on sources. No original-language quotation appears in this module. The account of the chronicle tradition's candour rests on the material worked in earlier parts of this study, particularly Hannah Barker's translation of al-Maqrizi's description of the barracks, and on the standard characterisations of al-Nuwayri, Ibn Taghribirdi and Ibn Iyas; the specialist historiographical literature on Mamluk chronicle-writing has not been worked here and should be before this module's central claim about candour is treated as settled. Ibn Abd al-Zahir's dates, offices and works follow the standard reference accounts; the characterisation of *al-Rawd al-Zahir* as finding moral justification for each of Baybars' actions is paraphrased from a scholarly journal note, and the reading of the official biography as overshadowing his brutality is paraphrased from a conference paper abstract and credited — both should be checked against P. M. Holt's and Peter Thorau's work on Baybars and his biographers. Baybars al-Mansuri's authorship of a chronicle and Ibn Kabar's role as his secretary and probable editor follow the reference accounts. On language, the description of Kipchak Turkic as the ruling caste's tongue, the compilation of dictionaries and grammars to bridge the gap, and the spread of Turkic-Arabic bilingualism among officials and the sons of mamluks are paraphrased from an encyclopaedic account and from a linguistics article; the statement that Mamluk rulers were often monolingual Turkic speakers is the strongest form of the claim found and should be treated as a generalisation admitting many exceptions, particularly in the later period — the text above qualifies it accordingly, and the argument does not require the barrier to have been absolute. The statement that Baybars was unfamiliar with Arabic and with Islamic learning is paraphrased from a peer-reviewed article on his rule. The Ibn Taymiyya material is drawn from encyclopaedic and popular accounts and is the part of this module most in need of checking against the specialist literature, above all Donald Little's study of the historical and historiographical significance of his detention and the Stanford Encyclopedia's treatment: the dates given for his Cairo imprisonment vary between 1305 and 1306 and the length between accounts, and both readings are recorded here rather than reconciled; the Damascus imprisonment of August 1320 to February 1321 over the divorce doctrine, the final internment from Sha'ban 726 / July 1326, and his death in the Damascus citadel in September 1328 are consistently reported. The figure of over a hundred thousand at his funeral is a chronicler's number of the usual kind and should be read as meaning "very many." The account of the trial in the house of Aq Sunqur al-Salari, Ibn Makhluf's ruling, and the public proclamations and purge of his followers comes from a single recent article summarising Raed al-Samhouri's work and is the least corroborated material above; if it does not survive checking, the module's argument rests instead on the uncontested facts that the prosecutions were initiated by rival scholars, that the four chief judges ordered the imprisonment, and that the charges were doctrinal rather than political.

MODULE 8

THE ARRANGEMENT NOBODY ATTACKED

Module 8 · Elite coordination and the default — a hierarchy in which nearly every man, defending his own position, defended the whole of it; two hundred and sixty-seven years of murder at the top and not one attempt to change what the top was; and the one group the arrangement dispossessed by design, every reign, on schedule

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The question, stated properly

Why the Egyptian peasant did not rise is a settled matter and not the interesting one. He had no weapons, no organisation, nowhere to go, and a belief he shared with his rulers. The unsolved problem in any durable hierarchy sits above him, among the men who have standing and means — and the question this module answers is why *they* kept it running.

Put it in its coldest form. Between 1250 and 1517 the men at the top of this order murdered each other continuously. Sultans were killed on the road from victories, strangled in citadels, deposed by their own commanders, replaced by children and then by the men who had installed the children. Emirs formed factions, betrayed each other, denounced each other with forged letters, and were exiled, imprisoned and executed in numbers. There is scarcely a decade without a coup or a serious attempt at one.

And in all of that, across two and a half centuries, **not one faction ever tried to change the arrangement itself.** Nobody abolished the revenue-assignment system. Nobody made the assignments hereditary by decree. Nobody opened the caste to Egyptians. Nobody dispensed with the purchase-train. Nobody touched the caliph. Every civil war in this study was a fight over who would occupy a machine that all sides agreed should keep running exactly as it was.

That is not loyalty, and explaining it as loyalty explains nothing, because these men demonstrably did not feel any toward each other. It is an *arrangement* — one in which

a man defending his own position, from motives of pure self-interest, thereby defends the whole structure whether he intends to or not. The question is how that alignment was produced, how far down and how far up it held, and where it failed.

Running the chain

Take the hierarchy above the common man link by link and ask the same question at each: *does this man, protecting what he has, thereby protect the arrangement?*

The fiscal bureaucracy. The scribes and accountants of the revenue bureaux — Copts in large numbers, Muslims too — held the one skill the ruling caste did not possess and could not acquire: they could read, calculate, and keep the registers on which every assignment in the country depended. They were indispensable, unarmed, permanently ineligible for power, and periodically the target of murderous public anger. Their position was pure dependence: the arrangement was the only thing between them and the crowd, and the state protected them because it needed them, dismissing them when the streets demanded it and quietly reinstating them afterwards. **Aligned, and completely.** A scribe defending his office defends a state that alone can defend him.

The religious establishment. The qadis, professors and endowment administrators held salaried posts in institutions the emirs had funded, appointed and dismissed at the sultan's discretion, and administered the vast property that had been endowed to religion. Their authority over the population was real and their material position was entirely a creature of the arrangement. Contemporaries noticed: some scholars were criticised by other scholars as *ulama al-salatin*, the scholars of the sultans, for their closeness to power. **Aligned**, though with an important reservation to be taken up in the next module — they held one thing the sultan needed and could, at the margin, withhold.

The excluded sons. The *awlad al-nas* were barred from the regiments their fathers commanded, and might have been the natural counter-elite: educated, wealthy, resentful, and free-born Muslims in a country ruled by slaves. They were not, because the arrangement seated them. They took the non-mamluk cavalry, the bureaucracy, the judgeships, the professorships and the writing of history; they administered the endowments through which their fathers' wealth reached them; and by the later period they were appearing as commanders in their own right — a register of revenue assignments from 778/1377 records mamluks' descendants holding emirates in Cairo. **Aligned**, but note what they were aligned to: an arrangement they benefited from *and*

were quietly eroding, since every endowment that carried a father's wealth to a son weakened the rule against inheritance.

The Bedouin. The desert tribes could not be conquered economically and were bought instead, and the price is revealing. The office of commander of the Arabs, held under the Ayyubids by numerous emirs at once, became with the onset of Mamluk rule in Syria in 1260 a hereditary office consolidated in the Al Fadl dynasty, remaining in the household of Isa ibn Muhanna and his descendants into the early Ottoman period. A caste that refused heritable position to itself granted exactly that to the tribes it needed and could not control. **Aligned**, and bought with the one currency the rulers denied themselves.

The emirs. Here the alignment is strongest and most systematic, and it is worth being precise about why. A great emir held a rank, a revenue assignment calibrated to that rank, a household of purchased men, and a share of the offices. Every one of those things was granted by the arrangement and cancellable by it. He could not turn his assignment into an estate; he could not pass his rank to his son; he could not recruit an Egyptian; he could not obtain a proclamation of legitimacy from anywhere but the office in Cairo. Defending his own position therefore meant defending the assignment system, the survey that valued it, the rank table that scaled it, the purchase-train that stocked his household, the exclusion that kept natives out of competition, and the caliphal office that made the whole thing lawful. **He could not defend himself without defending all of it.**

Why the alignment was so complete

Three features of the design produced that, and they are worth separating because each does distinct work.

First, there was nowhere to defect to. In most hierarchies a discontented magnate has alternatives: a rival dynasty, a neighbouring king, a church, a city, his own lineage's lands. A Mamluk emir had none. He could not go native — the caste line was purchase and foreign birth, and he was on the wrong side of it for civilian life. He could not found a dynasty, because his sons were barred from his own regiments. He could not take his wealth with him, because his wealth was a revocable claim on Egyptian tax revenue. The only life available to a man of his formation was the one the arrangement provided, and the only way to improve it was to rise within the arrangement.

Second, every position was a claim rather than a thing. This is the settlement's design reappearing as a political mechanism. A man who owns land owns something

the order cannot easily take and can therefore afford to defy it; a man who holds a revocable assignment owns nothing but his standing in a system, and his standing evaporates the moment the system does. The Mamluk elite had deliberately converted its own wealth into a form that could only be enjoyed inside the machine. **You cannot take an *iqta'* and go.**

Third, and most important, the prize could not be manufactured. The thing every faction was fighting for was the sultanate, and what made the sultanate worth having was not the citadel or the treasury but the proclamation — the caliph's investiture, the name in the Friday prayer, the recognition that turned a man with soldiers into a lawful sovereign. That could not be forged, invented, or replaced. It existed in one office, held by a powerless old man, and any faction that destroyed it would have won an empty building.

So the fighting was ferocious and self-limiting at once. **You do not burn the deed to the house you are fighting over.** Every rival had an identical, overwhelming interest in the survival of the machine that made victory meaningful — which is precisely why the machine survived a level of internal violence that would have destroyed an order held together by anything less structural.

The exception, and it was built in

Now the one group for whom the arithmetic ran the other way, and it is the finding this module exists to deliver.

The sultan's own purchased men were a distinct body with a distinct fate. The royal mamluks divided into two: those the reigning ruler had personally acquired, raised and trained — the *julban* or *mushtarawat*, the purchased ones — and those who had passed to him from previous sultans and from dead or disgraced emirs, called in the later sources the *qaranisa* or *mustakhdamun*, the used ones, the veterans.

The distinction was not sentimental. A new sultan favoured his own purchases, promoted them, quartered them in the best barracks, and progressively displaced the previous sultan's men from their posts to make room. The men so displaced kept their lives and their training and lost their position. And the previous sultan's *julban*, the most privileged body in the state on the day he died, became *qaranisa* on the day he was buried — sidelined, stripped of their posts, and frequently the objects of a grudge inherited from the old reign; while being, by the same token, the most experienced soldiers available, since a sultan spent them in the field in preference to his own new men.

Read what that means structurally. **Every succession dispossessed a cohort of armed, trained, formed men — by design, on schedule, at the exact moment when the state was weakest.** Not as an accident of politics, not as the cruelty of a particular sultan, but as the ordinary operation of the system. A body of several hundred to several thousand professional cavalrymen, bound to one another by the barracks and to nobody now living by patronage, watched its position transferred to strangers, and did so knowing that the men taking their places would suffer the same thing when the new sultan died.

That is a group with standing, means, cohesion, and a grievance, produced afresh every reign. And it is exactly where the coups came from.

Why the device produced it

The mechanism runs straight back to the study's spine, and this is where the whole case coheres.

The Mamluk answer to the problem of the capable men one level up was to abolish inheritance: no lineage could capture the state because no position passed to a son and the caste was re-purchased from outside each generation. That answer worked. No family ever captured Egypt in the way that families capture ordinary kingdoms, and for two and a half centuries the ruling class was reset by purchase rather than reproduced by blood.

But loyalty in this system was *personal and non-transferable*. It was bought, formed in a barracks, and owed to the man who had bought and freed you. It attached to an individual, not to an office, a lineage, or a state — because the whole point of the device was that there were no lineages to attach to. And a loyalty that attaches to an individual **expires when he does**.

A hereditary aristocracy solves this without noticing: allegiance transfers to the dead lord's heir, positions carry over, and a succession is a change of person within a continuing structure of obligation. The Mamluks had deliberately abolished exactly the mechanism that makes that possible. So they had a floor that had to be personally re-founded every reign — and re-founding it necessarily meant unmaking the previous foundation.

The anti-heredity device did not eliminate the succession problem. It relocated it. In a dynasty, a contested succession threatens one office. Here, every succession threatened every office simultaneously, because every man's position was held from a particular man who had died. That is why the violence at the top was

constant, why it was universal rather than confined to claimants, and — crucially — why it was never revolutionary. The dispossessed were not trying to build a different machine. They were trying to be re-seated in this one.

The child on the throne

The arrangement's answer to its own worst feature is the second finding, and it explains the most-mocked feature of Mamluk politics.

When a strong sultan died, the great emirs faced a problem with no good solution: each was roughly the equal of the others, each commanded a household, and any one of them taking the throne meant the rest submitting to a man they had recently regarded as a peer. The result would be immediate war. What they did instead was seat the dead sultan's son.

The scale of the practice is remarkable. The house of Qalawun held the sultanate's name from 1279 to 1382, and in the four decades from 1341 twelve descendants of al-Nasir Muhammad reigned, in a period when the military were more deeply involved in the political process than ever. The character of those reigns is not in doubt: in 1347 the twelve-year-old al-Nasir Hasan began his rule after a long succession crisis marked by years of mamluk revolts against the sultan — who through this period was a figurehead while the emirs held the real power — and by the deaths of his three brothers, each in turn made sultan and then deposed by the emirs.

The standard reading is that these were puppets and the sultanate a fiction. That is true and it is not the point. **A child of the dead sultan is a coordination device.** He is the one candidate every faction can accept precisely because he threatens none of them; his name preserves the continuity that the proclamation and the coinage require; the real power is exercised by whichever emir holds the commander-in-chief's office, which can change hands without changing the sultan; and when the bargain among the factions breaks down, the boy is deposed and a brother installed, which resets the negotiation without anyone having to concede the throne to a rival.

Seen that way the child sultan is not a deception practised on the population — the population knew perfectly well what was happening, and the chroniclers wrote it down. It is a device by which rivals of comparable strength avoid a war they cannot afford, by parking the title somewhere none of them holds it. The Qalawunid century is not the anti-heredity system failing. It is the anti-heredity system discovering that it needed a *placeholder* dynasty, and using one.

The drift

And having used it, the system drifted toward the thing it had been built to prevent.

The evidence has appeared in every module of this study and it accumulates here. Wealth escaped the non-inheritance rule through pious endowment, until something close to half of cultivable Egypt sat in a legal category the sultan could not touch and the founders' descendants administered. The excluded sons appear in a 1377 register of revenue assignments as emirs in Cairo. The house of Qalawun held the throne's name for a century. And the unit of politics itself became the *bayt* — the household — with the modern scholarly reading of the sultanate as a **military patronage state** organised around households and networks of patrons and clients rather than around offices.

A household is a lineage substitute. It has a founder, a memory, an inheritance of clients, and a name that outlives the man. The caste that abolished blood built houses instead, and houses began to behave the way families behave.

Where the fracture came from

The user's test is the right one: fracture arrives where a group with standing and means stops benefiting. Three candidates present themselves, and only one of them is the real thing.

The dispossessed cohort at each succession had standing, means and a grievance — and produced coups rather than collapse, precisely because what they wanted was to be re-seated. A group that wants the machine's benefits does not break the machine.

The Karimi merchants had standing and means, and genuinely stopped benefiting when the sultanate turned from taxing their trade to being its compulsory counterparty. They did not revolt; they had no armed household and no place in the hierarchy. They diverted, smuggled, and moved their capital — a fracture that took the form of an absence, and drained the second revenue stream without a single act of violence.

The late royal mamluks are the real fracture, and they are the inversion of the whole arrangement. By the fifteenth century the recruits were often adults at purchase rather than boys, quartered in the city rather than the barracks, and their relationship to the order had reversed: instead of being formed by it and defending it, they extracted from it. The clearest illustration is a victory. In 1486, after defeating an Ottoman force near Adana and winning again in March, the Mamluk troops — always a difficult body to discipline — demanded a bonus and immediate demobilisation, and their

commander could not keep them in the field despite unfinished sieges and the prospect of an Ottoman counterattack, so that most of them were back in Cairo by the end of the year. Contemporary and near-contemporary accounts describe the new recruits of the later period as unruly, privileged, lightly punished for offences, and a plague on the population, with even the strongest of the Circassian sultans unable to restrain them.

That is a group with standing and means whose interest had detached from the arrangement's survival. They were no longer defending a position within a machine; they were charging the machine for their services and threatening it when unpaid. And it is the one place in the chain where the default had genuinely broken.

Reading the default against the framework

Classify the case first, by name, as the card requires. The Mamluk answer to the open problem is **Prevent fused with a permanent Rotate**: deny the capable class the inheritance that would let it entrench, and re-draw the class itself from outside the population every single generation. It is the most radical version of that family in the collection — the Ottoman *devshirme* is its close cousin and drew from inside the empire's own borders — and it held, in recognisable form, for the better part of three centuries before corroding into households, endowed inheritance and a placeholder dynasty, which is the same corrosion the *devshirme* suffered and roughly the same distance into its life.

Two findings follow, and they compound rather than compete.

First: an arrangement is defended by everyone whose position is a revocable claim on it, and attacked by whoever it periodically cancels. The Mamluks achieved almost perfect alignment by converting every position in the hierarchy — the emir's revenue, the scribe's office, the judge's salary, the professor's chair — into a claim that existed only inside the machine and evaporated outside it. That is what made a chain of men who despised one another into a structure that defended itself without anyone intending to defend it. The diagnostic follows directly: **to find where an order will crack, do not look for the discontented; look for the group whose position the order's own normal operation destroys on a recurring schedule.** Discontent is everywhere and mostly harmless. Structural dispossession, in a body that has standing and means, is the thing.

Second, and this is the study's central contribution: abolishing heredity does not solve the succession problem, it distributes it. A device that prevents lineages from capturing the state must also prevent loyalty from being inherited, because

inherited loyalty *is* lineage seen from below. So allegiance can only be personal, and personal allegiance dies with the person — which converts a hereditary order's occasional crisis at a single point into a permanent crisis throughout the structure, recurring at every reign, dispossessing a full cohort each time. The Mamluks bought protection against the one catastrophic failure (a family capturing Egypt for ever) at the price of a chronic one (a violent redistribution of every position in the state, roughly once a decade, for two hundred and sixty-seven years).

They could afford that price for a specific and identifiable reason, and the reason is the module's last observation: **the chronic crisis stayed survivable only because the prize it was fought over could not be manufactured by any of the contestants.** So long as legitimacy lived in an office no faction could forge and none could do without, every winner needed the machine intact, and the wars stayed wars of occupation rather than wars of destruction. An order that runs continuous elite violence and survives it is almost always an order in which the thing being fought over would be destroyed by the fighting if the fighters were not so careful — and the care is the tell of where the real legitimacy sits.

A note on sources. No original-language quotation appears in this module. The division of the royal mamluks into the reigning sultan's own purchases and the veterans inherited from previous sultans and disgraced emirs, with the terms *julban*, *mushtarawat*, *qaranisa* and *mustakhdamun*, follows a modern survey of the Mamluk military and is the load-bearing structural fact of this module's argument; the further detail that a new sultan's men displaced the previous sultan's from their posts and quarters, and that the veterans were spent in the field in preference to the new recruits, is drawn from a popular reconstruction and from Setton's *History of the Crusades*, and should be verified against David Ayalon's studies of the Mamluk military institution before it is treated as settled — the argument depends on the pattern of dispossession at succession, which is well attested in the general literature, rather than on any single account of the mechanics. The characterisation of the later recruits as adults at purchase, unruly, lightly disciplined and beyond even Barsbay's control comes from Setton and is a hostile near-contemporary judgement of the usual kind, to be discounted for its moralising while noting that the structural claim — that the late *julban* extracted from the order rather than defending it — is independently supported by the 1486 episode. That episode, including the victory near Adana on 9 February 1486, the second engagement in March, the troops' demand for a bonus and demobilisation and the commander's inability to hold them in the field, follows an encyclopaedic account of the Mamluk-Ottoman wars. The figure of twelve descendants of al-Nasir Muhammad reigning between 1341 and 1382, the Qalawunid sultanate dated 1279–1382, and the reading of the sultanate as a military patronage state organised around households are Jo Van Steenbergen's, paraphrased and credited; his *Order out of Chaos* and his article on the Qalawunid household are the essential modern authorities for this module and should be read directly before the study is finalised. The account of al-Nasir Hasan's accession at twelve in 1347, after a succession crisis

in which three of his brothers were made sultan and deposed by the emirs and the sultan was a figurehead while the emirs held real power, is paraphrased from a research summary citing Byrne. The hereditary character of the office of commander of the Arabs in the Al Fadl line from 1260 follows the standard reference account. The register of revenue assignments of 778/1377 recording mamluks' descendants holding emirates in Cairo is cited from the title and abstract of a recent article and has not been consulted directly; it is used here only to support the uncontroversial claim that the *awlad al-nas* were appearing as commanders by the later fourteenth century. The criticism of some scholars as *ulama al-salatin* is reported from a modern article on scholars and educational office in the medieval Islamic era. Reign-by-reign figures for the frequency of coups and depositions have not been compiled here and should be, since the argument would be considerably strengthened by an actual count of successions and their outcomes across the period.

MODULE 9

A HEARING BUT NEVER A SEAT

Module 9 · Plurality and the liberty variable — what protections an Egyptian actually had against the apparatus, which factional fight inside the hierarchy each one fell out of, and why two and a half centuries of bargaining produced courts, endowments and petitions and never once let anybody in

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

The test

There is a state apparatus with a monopoly of organised violence. The question is whether anyone underneath it had protection from it — and whether that protection was a real thing or words.

Take the questions one at a time and answer them from the record rather than from the order's own account of itself. Could a subject petition? Could he sue an official? Could he assemble and protest? Could he speak? Was there property the ruler could not take? And behind each answer, the harder question, which is the one this module exists for: **where did the protection come from?** Not who wrote it down, but which party with standing and means wanted it, and why — because a peasant did not create any of these things, and a slave caste did not hand them out from kindness. Somebody inside the hierarchy needed something, was strong enough to bargain for it, and the residue of that bargain settled on everybody.

Could he petition? Yes — and the reason is the point

The clearest lever available to an Egyptian was the grievance session, and it was genuinely operative.

The institution was inherited rather than invented — a court of complaints against officials, theorised in the eleventh-century jurisprudence as a jurisdiction covering the abuse of power by rulers toward subjects and the extortions of tax collectors. The

Mamluks ran it and built for it. Al-Nasir Muhammad employed the emir Ibn al-Waziri, a man known to be tough on corruption, as head of the House of Justice, and every Monday the sultan listened to complaints from the common people against the officials and the emirs. The Mamluks maintained a court of complaint which heard cases brought by people against state officials and emirs.

A weekly session, presided over by the sovereign in person, at which an ordinary Egyptian could accuse an emir. That is not nothing, and it should not be waved away as theatre.

But ask whose instrument it was. A sultan's central problem was not the peasantry; it was the men one level below him, each holding an armed household and a revenue assignment in a province the sultan could not personally watch. A weekly public hearing at which the sultan's subjects came and told him what his commanders were doing in the countryside is, from the throne's point of view, an intelligence system and a disciplinary lever — a way of finding out which emir was extorting, and of making an example when it suited. The subject's right to be heard exists because the apex needed a channel into what the level below it was doing.

The tell is that the institution moved with the politics. In 789/1387 Barquq shifted the royal grievance sessions from the House of Justice, the long-established building at the centre of the Cairo Citadel, down to the Royal Stables in the lower and peripheral enclosure, and thereafter used the stable area as the stronghold of a new paternalistic style of rule. A right that is relocated to wherever the ruler is currently building his political base is a right whose function is political.

Could he be protected from arbitrary taxation? Sometimes — and the sources say why

Here the mechanism the user's framework predicts appears almost in so many words.

Islamic law distinguishes the canonical taxes from the *mukus* — the non-canonical levies with no basis in the sacred law — and Mamluk sultans imposed the latter freely. Al-Maqrizi's list of what al-Nasir Muhammad abolished gives the flavour of what a population was living under: the crops tax, the prisons tax, the poultry tax, the prostitutes' tax, the rubbish tax, the sailing tax and the wedding parties tax.

Abolitions of this kind happened repeatedly. And the reason they happened is stated plainly in the scholarship: during the Mamluk period sultans imposed taxes, retracted them for a time, and then re-imposed them; and although the abolition was always

good news for the population, its primary reason was not necessarily the population's well-being — the repeal of the *mukus* could be decreed in order to diminish the economic power of certain emirs who might represent a political danger to the sultan.

That is the module's mechanism, documented. A peasant in the Delta stopped paying a tax on his wedding because a sultan wanted to cut the revenue of a commander he distrusted. The relief was real, dated, and enjoyed by people who had no part in producing it. It was also reversible, and was reversed, repeatedly — because the interest that produced it was episodic.

The doctrinal objection was live and was voiced. The imposition of *mukus* on the Muslim population was criticised by the scholars; and in 1386, during the revolt known as the Zahiri disturbance, the scholar Ahmad al-Burhan al-Zahiri was imprisoned and brought before Barquq, who asked him the reasons for his revolt — among which he reproached the sultan for levying non-canonical taxes. The same episode shows an official refusing to collect: a governor named Baydamur was popular with the common people of Damascus both as a religious figure in his own right and for having refused to collect taxes levied by the Mamluks which had no origin in Islamic law.

So there was a language of objection, it was used, and men with standing sometimes acted on it. What there was not was a mechanism that made the objection stick against a sultan who wanted the money.

Could he assemble? Yes, and it worked at the margin

Urban protest in this period was frequent enough to have generated its own scholarship, and the reading of it is not that the crowd was a mob but that it was a party to a negotiation. Popular protest in late medieval Egypt and Syria functioned as a form of negotiation, in which different groups worked out their interests with the powers that be; even people with no direct access to power used protests and demonstrations to make themselves heard on currency devaluation, on taxes and levies, and on the injustices and perceived corruption of officials.

And it could force a reversal. In the disturbances of 1386, the military, fearing that the revolt would spread among the lower classes, immediately cancelled the labour sentences that had been imposed and returned the prisoners to the Citadel.

Note the conditions under which that worked. The elite was already split — there was a revolt in progress, a faction in arms, a sultan whose position was contested. The crowd's leverage was not its own strength; it was the possibility that its anger might

attach itself to one side of a quarrel already under way. A crowd facing a united hierarchy in a valley with no exit had no leverage at all, and the record of what its anger did when it had nowhere useful to go is the record of the assaults on the Copts.

Could he speak? Yes about the regime, dangerously about God

The answer here inverts what a modern reader expects and has already been established in this study: the chroniclers recorded the sultanate's murders, usurpations and abuses in detail and were not molested for it, while the most formidable scholar of the age died in a citadel over rulings on divorce law, grave-visiting and the divine attributes — prosecuted not by the palace but by rival scholars, with the four chief judges ordering the imprisonment.

For the liberty question the consequence is precise. Political speech was substantially free because the regime's legitimacy did not depend on its own conduct. Doctrinal speech was dangerous because the regime's legitimacy depended entirely on the law, and the law was owned by a class that policed its own boundaries and could borrow the state's prison to do it. **The interpreter position here was crowded rather than captured — four schools, competing, none able to silence the others — and the crowding did produce a real liberty, since a man condemned in one school's terms had three others to appeal to. It also produced the machinery by which an outlier could be destroyed, since a coalition of the four could reach the citadel.**

Property the ruler could not take

This is the largest and most durable protection in the whole order, and its origin is the purest instance of the mechanism.

A caste forbidden to leave anything to its sons found the one legal category the sultan could not confiscate — the pious endowment — and poured its wealth into it, naming its own descendants as administrators and beneficiaries. That was self-interest and nothing else. What it produced, over two and a half centuries, was an enormous endowed sector: colleges, mosques, Sufi hospices, hospitals, drinking fountains, libraries, with permanent incomes attached to named properties, administered under the sacred law, staffed by native scholars, and educating native students — and standing, by the end, on something close to half the cultivable land of Egypt.

Consider what that means as a liberty. A professor's chair, a hospital's revenue, a college's building and a scholar's salary were not at the sultan's disposal. He could appoint and dismiss judges; he could not defund the institution. He could take an emir's revenue assignment overnight; he could not take an endowment without attacking the sacred law on which his own right to rule rested. There is an entire institutional space here — the largest in the medieval Islamic world — that exists outside the state's reach, and it was built by men who were trying to provide for their children.

Nobody intended it as a public good. Everybody in Egypt used it.

Could he choose his judge? He could choose his law

One further protection is worth naming because it is genuinely unusual and its origin is administrative rather than moral. From 1265 there were four chief judges in Cairo, one for each Sunni school, of nearly equal standing, and the reform is read as having produced a legal system both uniform and flexible.

For a litigant that meant something concrete: the four schools differed on real questions of property, marriage, contract and inheritance, and a man with a case could seek the forum whose doctrine suited him. That is a procedural liberty of a substantial kind, available to ordinary people, and it existed in Mamluk Egypt in a form it did not take elsewhere.

It was granted by a slave-soldier sultan who wanted a legal system he could work with, in a context where four schools were competing for state recognition and each was glad to have its own chief judgeship. No one framed it as a right. It fell out of an administrative arrangement and a competition for patronage, and once it existed, people used it for their own purposes.

What made any of it more than words

Now the question the module is really for. Some of these protections were durable and some evaporated. What distinguishes them?

Not their legal form; all of them had sound doctrinal warrant. Not the ruler's good faith; the same sultans who abolished the *mukus* re-imposed them. What distinguishes them is **how many parties with standing had a continuing interest in enforcement, and whether that interest survived a change of ruler.**

Run the three cases.

The **endowment** was the most robust protection in the order, and it had the widest coalition. The scholars administering it, the founders' descendants drawing from it, the students taught in it, the judges applying its law, and the sultan's own need to be seen upholding that law all pointed the same way. No individual's death changed the alignment. A sultan who breached it attacked simultaneously the religious establishment, the families of his own emirs, and the doctrine his throne rested on. It held for two and a half centuries and survived into the Ottoman period.

The **grievance session** was real but fragile, because its enforcer was one man. It existed as a lever in the hand of a sultan who wanted to discipline his emirs, and its vigour therefore tracked the vigour of individual sultans — strong under al-Nasir Muhammad with a corruption-hunting emir presiding, repositioned by Barquq to serve a new political style, and of no use whatever under a child on the throne with the emirs holding the real power. **A liberty with one enforcer is a liberty for one reign.**

The **abolition of arbitrary taxes** was the weakest, because the interest behind it was not merely narrow but episodic. It served a sultan's move against a particular emir at a particular moment. When the moment passed, the tax came back, and the sources record exactly that cycle of imposition, retraction and re-imposition.

So the general rule this case yields: **a written protection becomes a real one in proportion to the number of parties with standing who lose something concrete if it is breached, and in proportion to how far their stake is structural rather than personal.** One patron is a favour. A class with property, offices and doctrine tied to the thing is an institution.

The wall the residue never crossed

And here is the limit, which is what makes this case worth having beside the others.

In most orders the mechanism of factional bargaining eventually widens the settlement. A faction extracts a concession; the concession creates a category of protected person; over generations the category admits people who were previously outside it; and what began as a baronial demand becomes, several centuries later, a franchise. The residue accretes *and it moves the boundary*.

That could not happen here. The line between inside and outside was drawn on having been born a non-Muslim outside the abode of Islam and bought as a child — a qualification fixed before the age of reason, in another country, by somebody else's transaction, and unobtainable by any subsequent act. No concession any faction could

extract, no service any Egyptian could perform, no wealth, learning, piety or loyalty could carry a man across it. Even the ruling caste's own free-born Muslim sons were on the wrong side.

So two and a half centuries of exceptionally vigorous factional conflict, in which the winners repeatedly had to buy support and the losers repeatedly had to be conciliated, produced a rich sediment of *protections* — a court of complaints, a judiciary with four available doctrines, an inviolable endowed sector, a language in which non-canonical taxation could be denounced as illegitimate, a public in which protest functioned as negotiation — and produced **not one Egyptian inside the ruling caste.** The Bedouin were bought with a hereditary office; the scholars were bought with endowments and judgeships; the sons of mamluks were bought with the non-mamluk cavalry and the bureaucracy. Nobody was ever let in.

Reading liberty against the framework

The card treats the liberty variable as a question about the trusted-information position — captured by one hand or crowded by many that check one another — and holds that liberties are residue of factional bargains among those with standing rather than grants from above or wins from below. This case confirms the mechanism exactly, supplies unusually explicit documentation of it, and adds two things.

First, the durability test. The framework should distinguish liberties by the structure of the interest defending them, because the same doctrinal warrant produced protections of wildly different strength here. A protection whose enforcement serves one office-holder's current strategy lasts as long as his strategy; a protection whose breach would cost a whole class its property, income and standing is close to permanent. **So the question to ask of any right in any case is not who granted it but who would be hurt by its violation, how many of them there are, whether they have standing and means, and whether their stake outlives the men who currently hold it.** By that test the endowed sector was the strongest liberty in Mamluk Egypt and the sultan's weekly hearing was among the weakest, though the second looks far more like a right and the first looks like a tax dodge.

Second, and this is the contribution: where the elite boundary is drawn on an unearnable criterion, factional residue accumulates protections but never widens the settlement. The ordinary long-run mechanism by which bargaining among insiders eventually admits outsiders requires that the boundary be crossable in principle — by wealth, by service, by marriage, by conversion, by credential. Then a

concession made to buy a faction's support can, over generations, be generalised into a qualification. Where entry depends on an event in a stranger's childhood, no concession can ever be generalised into admission, because there is nothing for it to be generalised *into*. The order can become steadily more law-bound, more institutionally rich, and more protective of its subjects — and remain, at the end of three centuries, exactly as closed as it was on the first day.

That is the finding to carry to the cases where the boundary *was* crossable, and it suggests a sharp comparative question: not how many liberties an order accumulated, but whether its ruling class was recruited by something a subject could in principle acquire. **An order that recruits by an unearnable criterion can be reformed and cannot be entered.** The Egyptians of the Mamluk sultanate had courts they could use, endowments they could teach in, a sultan they could petition on a Monday, and a vocabulary in which they could call a tax unlawful to the ruler's face. They had no route whatsoever to the room where anything was decided, and no bargain struck by anyone inside it could ever have made one.

A note on sources. No original-language quotation appears in this module. Al-Maqrizi's list of the non-canonical taxes abolished by al-Nasir Muhammad — the crops, prisons, poultry, prostitutes', rubbish, sailing and wedding-party taxes — is reported at second hand from a reference account citing the *Suluk* and Shayyal, and has not been checked against an edition; it is used here as illustration of the range of such levies rather than as an exhaustive or exact list. The account of al-Nasir Muhammad's appointment of Ibn al-Waziri to head the House of Justice and of the Monday grievance sessions comes from the same reference account and should be verified against Amalia Levanoni's study of his third reign. The statement that repeals of the *mukus* could be decreed in order to weaken emirs who posed a political danger to the sultan — the load-bearing sentence of this module — is paraphrased from a scholarly blog post by Mehdi Berriah on the financing of jihad under the sharia, which cites the underlying literature; it should be traced to that literature before the argument is treated as settled, though the pattern of imposition, retraction and re-imposition is independently attested. The 1386 exchange in which Ahmad al-Burhan al-Zahiri reproached Barquq for levying non-canonical taxes comes from the same source; the details of the Zahiri disturbance, including Baydamur's popularity for refusing to collect such taxes and the military's cancellation of labour sentences for fear the revolt would spread to the lower classes, follow a reference account of that episode and should be checked. Amina Elbendary's work on urban protest in late medieval Egypt and Syria is the authority for the reading of popular protest as negotiation and is paraphrased and credited from a chapter abstract; her book should be read directly, since this module's treatment of assembly rests on it and on nothing else. Barquq's removal of the grievance sessions from the House of Justice to the Royal Stables in 789/1387 is paraphrased from an article abstract in *Al-Masaq* and is used here as evidence that the institution's location tracked the sultan's political needs; the article's fuller argument has not been consulted. The characterisation of the grievance jurisdiction as covering abuse of power by rulers and

extortion by tax collectors derives from al-Mawardi's *Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* as summarised in modern accounts, not from the text. The four-school judiciary and the endowment material rest on the sources given in earlier parts of this study. The claim that no Egyptian ever entered the ruling caste is stated here in the strong form the literature supports for the caste proper, and should be read alongside the qualification established earlier: free-born men, including the sons of mamluks and some natives, did hold positions in the non-mamluk cavalry, the bureaucracy and occasionally emirates, and the boundary being described is the one around the purchased caste itself.

MODULE 10

THE LEFT FLANK AT MARJ DABIQ

Module 10 · Change and collapse — no farmer ended this order; a rival hierarchy did, arriving through a fracture inside the Mamluk one, after a century in which plague, diverted trade and a soldiery that had begun charging its own state emptied the treasury and repriced everything

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What did not happen

Two hundred and sixty-seven years. A peasantry of millions, bound to its villages, taxed at something like a fifth of the yield by armed men who could flog and imprison it. Recurrent plague. Famines when the flood failed. Debasement of the coinage. Arbitrary levies on crops, weddings and rubbish. A ruling caste that was ethnically alien, spoke another language, and periodically fought its wars in the streets of Cairo.

And in all of it, no rising from below ever came close to ending the order. There were protests, and they mattered at the margin; there were riots, and their most reliable target was a licensed minority rather than the regime; there were revolts, and the ones that shook the state were led by emirs with armed households. A functioning apparatus does not lose to its own unarmed population, and this apparatus functioned to the end. The men who took Cairo in 1517 were not Egyptians and had not been summoned by Egyptians.

So the question is which crack. The order fractured, exhausted itself, and was conquered — and the interesting finding is that these were not three alternatives but one sequence, in which the last of them arrived *through* the first.

The repricing

The fifteenth century emptied the arrangement's ledger from three directions at once, and none of them was a rebellion.

Plague did the first and most of it. The Black Death reached Egypt in 1347 and returned repeatedly, and it did not merely kill people — it destroyed the revenue base on which every rank in the hierarchy was calibrated. Assignments were valued against the yield of surveyed land, and land with no one on it yields nothing. Every emir's income was a fraction of a shrinking quantity.

Trade did the second. Egypt's other great revenue stream was a toll on goods passing between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, and a state short of land revenue reached for it — Barsbay's edicts of the 1420s and 1430s compelling the merchants to sell to government agents at fixed prices, which briefly doubled receipts and then drove the merchant networks into smuggling and their capital into other circuits. A transit rent is disciplined not by revolt but by rerouting, and the rerouting happened.

The soldiers did the third, and this is where the exhaustion became structural rather than merely fiscal. A state that cannot pay a floor it must buy abroad discovers that the floor starts charging. By the later period the recruits were often adults at purchase, quartered in the city, and behaving as claimants on the treasury rather than as its instrument. The clearest demonstration is a victory rather than a defeat: in 1486, having beaten an Ottoman army near Adana in February and beaten it again in March, the Mamluk troops demanded a bonus and immediate demobilisation, and their commander could not hold them in the field despite unfinished sieges and an expected counterattack, so that most of them were home in Cairo by the end of the year.

That is the repricing. The cost-benefit calculus of every man in the arrangement had changed: there was less to distribute, the distribution was more contested, and the body whose whole function was to defend the arrangement had begun to treat it as something to extract from. None of that was caused by peasants, and none of it produced a peasant rising. It produced a state that could not pay.

The weapon they could not pick up

The military failure needs handling carefully, because the popular version — that the Mamluks despised firearms and were destroyed by their own snobbery — is too simple, and the scholarship that established the facts says so.

David Ayalon's study of gunpowder in the sultanate found firearms in Mamluk use from around the close of the 1360s, and traced the whole arc: the terminology, the cannon and the siege engines, field artillery accepted considerably faster than handguns, and, in the last decades, a genuine attempt at reform. Qansuh al-Ghawri increased the casting of cannon, renewed the traditional mounted training, and created a unit of arquebusiers; Tuman Bay made a further desperate effort at the end. Ayalon weighs the caste's social hostility to the new weapon against the other obstacles rather than reducing everything to prejudice, and any account that skips that qualification is not describing what happened.

But one detail in his findings carries the whole structural point, and it is this: **the arquebusier unit — the fifth barracks — was manned by black slaves, not by mamluks.**

That is the shape of the problem exactly. A mamluk was not simply a soldier who happened to use a bow. He *was* the bow and the lance: the years of mounted training were the same years that produced the barracks brotherhood, the bond to the master, and the identity that made a purchased foreign boy into a member of a ruling caste. Formation, loyalty and weapon-set were a single object. A mamluk who put down the bow to carry an arquebus on foot was not a mamluk with a new weapon; he was no longer the thing the whole system existed to produce.

So the caste had exactly two routes to gunpowder, and both were fatal. It could reform itself around the new weapon, dissolving the training, the identity and the loyalty mechanism in the process. Or it could hand the decisive arm to men outside the caste — and it took that route, giving muskets to slaves who had no standing in the settlement, no share in its wealth, no prospect of rising in it, and correspondingly little reason to die for it. Then it went to war against the Ottomans, whose gunpowder infantry were the standing corps of their state, seated, paid, and inside their settlement rather than beneath it.

Al-Ghawri's army marched north in May 1516, in a contemporary account's phrase, appointed well in all respects but artillery.

The offer that was refused

One fact should be recorded before the battles, because it complicates any story of pure victimhood.

Selim did not initially propose to destroy the Mamluk order. He proposed to absorb it. He offered the Mamluk sultan peace as an Ottoman vassal, and his messengers were

intercepted and killed by mamluks. The offer was renewed after Marj Dabiq: hoping to avoid the march across Sinai, Selim proposed to Tuman Bay, who had taken power in Cairo, that he submit and govern Egypt as the Ottoman viceroy — the common Ottoman practice — and Tuman Bay remained defiant.

That was a real option and it was the one the arrangement's own logic recommended: submission would have preserved the caste, the assignments, the households and the purchase-train under a distant suzerain, which is very close to what happened anyway after 1517 and what did happen for the following three centuries. It was refused twice, and the men who refused it were the apex. The destruction of the order was, at the final moment, chosen by the order.

The left flank

The Ottoman and Mamluk armies met at Marj Dabiq, north of Aleppo, on 24 August 1516. Al-Ghawri had set out from Cairo on 18 May with a large force, appointed well in all respects but artillery, leaving Tuman Bay in control of Cairo; the host included fifteen emirs of a thousand and five thousand of his own royal mamluks, supplemented on the march by Syrian and Bedouin contingents.

And then the thing that decided it. The left flank commander, Khair Bey, had secretly allied himself with Selim and abandoned his position. As the Mamluk lines collapsed, the aged Qansuh al-Ghawri suffered a stroke while trying to mount his horse and died on the field; his body was never recovered. The contemporary chronicler Ibn Iyas is quoted in modern accounts describing the aftermath as a time of wrath that turned children's hair white — a rendering not verified here against an edition, and so paraphrased rather than quoted. The Ottomans then took Aleppo and Damascus without resistance.

Now the payment, which is the module's central evidence. In reward for his betrayal at Marj Dabiq, Selim installed Khair Bey as Ottoman governor of Egypt, and Janbirdi al-Ghazali, another former Mamluk commander, was appointed governor of Damascus.

The two men who broke the Mamluk line were given the two provinces. This is not a conquest that defeated a hierarchy from outside. It is a conquest that recruited part of a hierarchy, at the price of the positions that hierarchy could no longer guarantee its own members — and the price was paid in exactly the currency the Mamluk arrangement had run on, which was standing and a revenue.

The gate

The rest followed quickly. The Ottomans defeated the Mamluks again near Gaza in October; Tuman Bay recruited frantically from every class of society and from the Bedouin and tried to equip his forces with cannon and firearms, at the last minute and on a limited scale; and at the doorstep of Cairo the Battle of Ridaniyya was fought in late January 1517, in which the Ottoman commander Hadim Sinan Pasha was killed and Selim and Tuman Bay faced each other. A few days later the Ottomans took and sacked Cairo and captured the caliph al-Mutawakkil III. Tuman Bay regrouped at Giza, where he was finally captured and hanged at the gate of Cairo. One account of Ridaniyya puts the Egyptian army at twenty thousand and has it broken within twenty minutes when the Ottomans came round and attacked from the rear; the Mamluks, finally grasping the need for firearms, had assembled what they could, and what Egypt had was siege artillery, unsuited to the war it was about to fight. Tuman Bay confronted the Ottomans near Giza on 2 April 1517 with four thousand cavalry and some eight thousand infantry, was defeated and captured; Selim intended to spare him, but Khair Bey and Janbirdi al-Ghazali persuaded the Ottoman sultan that he was too dangerous to keep alive, and the last Mamluk sultan was hanged at Bab Zuwayla. Sources give the date as 13 or 15 April 1517.

Bab Zuwayla is where this study began. In 1260 the order announced its existence by nailing the heads of Hulagu's envoys above that gate. In 1517 it ended with its last sultan hanging from the same gate, on the advice of two of its own emirs.

What did not die

And then the finding that makes this case unlike any other collapse in the collection.

The Mamluk Sultanate ceased to exist and the recruitment of Royal Mamluks ended — and the mamluks as a military-social class continued to exist. The Ottoman Empire retained them as an Egyptian ruling class, and the Mamluks and the Burji families regained much of their influence as Ottoman vassals. Recruitment resumed from a new source, with new slave recruits introduced from Georgia in the Caucasus. By the eighteenth century they were governing Egypt in practice again: Ali Bey al-Kabir rose to the leading office in 1760, consolidated control against rival mamluks and the senior Ottoman officials, terminated the annual tribute to the Ottoman sultan and struck coins in his own name by 1769 — an effective declaration of sovereignty — and then campaigned into Syria, taking southern Palestine and Damascus in 1770–71 and briefly

reconstituting something like the old Mamluk empire. Napoleon defeated them in 1798 and drove them into Upper Egypt, by which time they had added muskets to their cavalry charge.

The end came in a corridor. On 1 March 1811 all the Mamluk beys then in Cairo were invited to the Citadel for the ceremony investing Muhammad Ali's son Tusun with command of the army; Shahin Bey and the other chiefs came with their retinues, were courteously received, took coffee, and formed up in procession between the Pasha's troops for the slow descent of the steep narrow road to the great gate — and as they reached it the gate was shut in front of them, and the Albanian troops who had left last were given the order to massacre everyone inside. During the following week an estimated three thousand Mamluks and their relatives were killed across Egypt, more than a thousand in the Cairo citadel alone, and a party escaped south into what is now Sudan. Figures for the men in the defile itself vary from around four hundred and seventy to six or seven hundred and should be given as a range.

Nearly three centuries after the state fell, the institution was finally destroyed — and not in a battle. It was destroyed by shutting a gate behind it and ending the purchases.

Reading collapse against the framework

The case confirms the thesis and returns two refinements.

Confirmation first, and it is unambiguous. Across two hundred and sixty-seven years, a bound and heavily taxed peasantry produced no structural change whatever. The order was hollowed by plague, by the diversion of a trade it could not compel, and by its own soldiery turning claimant; and it was finished by a rival hierarchy with better artillery and a seated infantry. At no point was a farmer, a weaver or a labourer the proximate agent of anything. The common man appears exactly where the thesis says he appears — as the body count of the sack, as the levies Tuman Bay recruited frantically at the end, as the crowd whose possible anger made an elite faction cancel a labour sentence during someone else's revolt.

The first refinement concerns two of the four cracks. Conquest and fracture are treated on the card as distinct ways a floor breaks, and here they were one movement. Selim's army was better, but Marj Dabiq was decided by a Mamluk commander walking off his own left flank, and the two men who broke the line were paid in the governorships of Egypt and Damascus. **A conquering elite rarely defeats a hierarchy; it recruits a faction of one, and pays in the positions the failing order can no longer guarantee.** The implication for research is practical: when a

conquest succeeds unexpectedly fast against a militarily serious opponent, look for the men on the losing side who were rewarded afterwards, because the reward is the record of the transaction. And the mechanism is a straightforward extension of the default — an arrangement holds while defending your position means defending the whole; when the whole can no longer guarantee positions, the same self-interest that held it together makes a better offer from outside worth taking.

The second refinement is this study's own, and it links the collapse to everything that came before it. An order whose ruling class is constituted by a specific military technique cannot adopt a technique that would dissolve the class. For the Mamluks, the years of mounted archery were not a training programme attached to the caste; they *were* the caste — the same process that produced the soldier produced the brotherhood, the bond to a master, and the identity that made a bought foreign boy into a ruler. The gun could therefore be adopted only by ceasing to be mamluks, or by arming men the settlement excluded. They chose the second, and gave the decisive weapon to slaves with no stake in the outcome.

So: **the tighter and more formation-dependent the criterion that constitutes an elite, the less that elite can re-tool, because re-tooling changes the criterion.** The closure that produced this order's extraordinary cohesion — a caste no one could enter, reproduced by purchase, formed in barracks, defined by four martial arts — is the same closure that made it unable to become something else when the technology moved. That is a genuine trade and it should be priced as one in every case: **coherence and adaptability are bought from the same account.**

And a bounded sub-finding, which corrects an earlier law of this collection. A previous study concluded that a rented floor cannot outlive its paymaster by a day, on the evidence of a colonial auxiliary corps that evaporated the moment the metropole fell. The Mamluks appear to refute it, having outlived their state by two hundred and ninety-four years. The resolution is that the earlier law was true but unbounded: **a rented floor dissolves with its paymaster only where the paymaster is external to it.** The colonial auxiliary was rented *by* somebody; when the wage stopped, the corps stopped. The Mamluk caste was its own purchaser, its own trainer, its own beneficiary and its own apex — a floor that rented itself — and so the fall of the political summit left the reproducing institution intact for the Ottomans to find useful and preserve. Which yields the corollary that Muhammad Ali understood and Selim did not need to: **such a floor is not ended by defeating it but by ending its reproduction.** In 1517 a state was destroyed and an institution survived. In 1811 the

institution was destroyed, by killing the men in a corridor and never buying any more boys.

A note on sources. No exact quotation appears in this module. Ibn Iyas's description of the aftermath of Marj Dabiq is paraphrased rather than quoted because the rendering available to me is from a popular history site and has not been checked against an edition; Ibn Iyas is the essential contemporary source for the fall and his chronicle should be consulted directly before this module is finalised. The phrase describing al-Ghawri's army as well appointed in all respects but artillery is likewise a second-hand rendering, reported in a reference account citing Muir, and is used above as reported speech rather than as verified wording. Ayalon's *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Kingdom* (1956) is the authority for the military-technological argument and is paraphrased from its chapter structure and from summaries of its findings rather than from the text itself, which should be read directly: the points relied on here are that firearms were in Mamluk use from around the close of the 1360s, that field artillery was accepted more readily than hand-guns, that al-Ghawri cast cannon, renewed the mounted training and formed a unit of arquebusiers manned by black slaves — the fifth barracks — that Tuman Bay made a last effort, and that Ayalon explicitly weighed the caste's social antagonism to firearms against other obstacles rather than treating it as a sufficient explanation. The detail that the arquebusier unit was manned from outside the caste carries a great deal of this module's argument and should be verified in Ayalon's text before the argument is treated as secure. The claim, found in a popular account, that this unit was later transformed by the Ottomans into janissaries is not used above and should be treated with suspicion. The military narrative follows the standard reference accounts: Selim's offer of vassalage and the killing of his messengers; Marj Dabiq on 24 August 1516 with al-Ghawri's departure from Cairo on 18 May, fifteen emirs of a thousand and five thousand royal mamluks; Khair Bey's defection from the left flank and al-Ghawri's death by stroke with his body never recovered; the fall of Aleppo and Damascus; the defeat near Gaza in October; Ridaniyya in late January 1517, dated variously to 22, 23 and 24 January by different accounts, all of which are recorded here rather than reconciled; the sack of Cairo and the capture of the caliph al-Mutawakkil III; Tuman Bay's stand at Giza on 2 April with four thousand cavalry and about eight thousand infantry; and his execution at Bab Zuwayla on 13 or 15 April 1517, the discrepancy again left standing. Troop figures throughout this period are contested and are reported as the sources give them: Marj Dabiq strengths of sixty thousand against sixty to eighty thousand, and casualty figures ranging from seven to sixty-five thousand on the Mamluk side, are too wide to be usable and are not relied on above; the twenty-thousand figure for Ridaniyya and the twenty-minute collapse come from a single popular account and should be treated as illustrative only. The survival narrative — the continuation of the mamluks as a military-social class under Ottoman rule, recruitment resuming from Georgia, Ali Bey al-Kabir's rise from 1760, his termination of the tribute and minting of coins by 1769, the Syrian campaigns of 1770–71, and Napoleon's victory in 1798 — follows the standard reference accounts and would benefit from Daniel Crecelius's work on eighteenth-century Egypt. The Citadel massacre of 1 March 1811 is well attested in outline; the number killed in the defile is given variously as around four hundred and seventy, six hundred, and seven hundred, and the wider toll as roughly three thousand across Egypt in the following week with more than a thousand in the Citadel,

and all of these should be read as ranges. The story of a single survivor leaping a horse from the walls is a tradition, reported with different names attached, and is noted here as such rather than asserted.

MODULE 11

THE CANALS THEY COULD NOT DREDGE

Module 11 · The grim accounting — what the arrangement cost held against what it built; a plague the order did not cause and a famine its landholding system would not let the country recover from; and an Egyptian who wept for the Turks

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

Two columns, kept apart

The temptation in a module of this kind is to net the figures — to set the mosques against the massacres and report a balance. That is not what an accounting is for. Both columns are real, neither cancels the other, and the reader is owed them separately and in full.

The harder discipline is the second one: to count what the arrangement cost without counting only what the sword did. The deaths a conquest causes directly are usually the smaller number. The larger one arrives later, through what the conquest did to the machinery a population was living on.

The sword's own column

Take the direct violence first, and note at the outset that it cannot be quantified honestly. The troop and casualty figures for this period are irreconcilable — Marj Dabiq alone is reported with Mamluk losses running anywhere from seven thousand to sixty-five thousand, which is not a range but an admission that nobody knows. What can be given is the shape.

There were the wars the order was built for: the destruction of a French crusade in the Delta in 1250, with thousands of prisoners executed after the surrender; Ayn Jalut and the long war with the Ilkhanids; the reduction of the crusader states over the following decades; the campaigns in Syria, Anatolia and Cyprus. There was the

conquest that ended it — Marj Dabiq, the defeat near Gaza, Ridaniyya, and a three-day sack of Cairo, with two thousand reported executed after the first battle.

There was the internal violence, which was continuous. Sultans murdered on roads and in citadels; emirs executed and exiled in numbers; and factional fighting conducted in the streets of the capital, where rival commanders used their private households against one another with, as the reference accounts put it plainly, major disruption to civilian life. There was the ordinary machinery of order — men crucified at the city gate and left for days, heads on spikes above it.

And there was the violence the order permitted rather than committed: eight recorded assaults on the Copts between 1250 and 1354, riots with forced conversions in 1301, some sixty churches and many monasteries destroyed in 1321, and the grinding of a community that had been Egypt's majority within historical memory toward a minority.

Then, three centuries later, the coda: roughly three thousand mamluks and their relatives killed across Egypt in the week following 1 March 1811, more than a thousand in the Cairo Citadel alone.

That is the sword's column. It is large, it is terrible, and it is not the main entry.

The plague, which they did not cause

The main entry is demographic, and honesty requires stating first that the order did not cause it.

Plague reached Egypt in 1347 and returned in waves for the rest of the sultanate's life. It came out of Central Asia along trade routes; it struck Christian Europe and Muslim Egypt alike; and no policy available to a fourteenth-century government could have stopped it. The Mamluks are not responsible for the Black Death, and a study that implied otherwise would be worthless.

The scale in Egypt is now estimable, if roughly. Recent work using the Mamluk chronicles concludes that rural Egypt lost more than forty per cent of its population between 1347 and 1517, and the same analysis notes why the country was so vulnerable: Egypt's Nile Valley is a thin strip of arable land bounded by desert and hugging the river at every point, while the Delta is crisscrossed with canals and inland waterways used for carrying grain in small ships.

Pause on that, because it is the cruellest thing in this study. The geography that made Egypt the cheapest country in the world to hold — one valley, no dispersal, no exit, everybody within reach of the river — is the same geography that made it efficient at

moving a disease. A population that cannot scatter from a tax collector cannot scatter from an epidemic either. The order's greatest structural asset and its worst catastrophe rest on the identical feature of the ground, and nobody designed either.

The note called in

Now the metabolic entry, and here the arrangement's fingerprints are all over it.

Egypt's population was not what the valley would carry unaided. It was what the valley would carry *when managed* — by basin irrigation, by a system of dikes, sluice-gates and canals that captured the flood, held it on the fields, and drained it, and that required continuous dredging, repair and extension to keep working at all. That system was fixed capital of enormous value and it had an unusual property: it consumed labour permanently. Before the plague, as the scholarship puts it, Egypt's surplus agricultural population — unlike England's — was easily absorbed by the labour-intensive work of dredging canals, building dykes and expanding the irrigation system.

Then forty per cent of the countryside died, and the labour was not there.

After the plague the countryside no longer had the human resources to maintain the system, and the failure to maintain it led to water-logged soil, massive declines in productivity, the retreat of the peasantry from markets, and Bedouin occupation. The state of it by the middle of the following century is given in Stuart Borsch's own summary: by the mid-fifteenth century Egypt's agrarian system had been badly damaged, the irrigation system functioning poorly in many areas and lying in ruins in others; badly damaged systems were overrun by Bedouin tribes, and large sections of Upper Egypt — by far the more fertile region — along with the eastern and western sections of the Delta lay in Bedouin hands. The fall in agricultural output is documented from 1315 through to 1517.

That is the metabolic note being called. A civilisation had lifted Egypt's population far above the land's unmanaged carrying capacity by means of coordinated labour; a shock removed the labour; the coordination failed; and the carrying capacity itself fell — which means the dying did not stop when the epidemic passed. It continued for a century and a half as fields went out of cultivation, as districts silted and waterlogged, and as land that had fed people fed nobody.

Whose fingerprint

And here the accounting reaches the arrangement itself, because Egypt's failure to recover was not universal. England took the same shock.

Borsch's comparative study is built on exactly that pairing — two agrarian economies with roughly equivalent pre-plague output — and its conclusion is that the difference lay in landholding rather than in religion or culture: Egypt's centralised and urban landholding system was unable to adapt to massive depopulation, while England's localised and rural system had fully recovered by the year 1500.

State plainly what Egypt's system was. Non-heritable revenue assignments, calibrated to military rank, reassigned and reclaimed at the sultan's discretion, held by a foreign military caste resident in Cairo, who never owned an acre and whose sons could inherit nothing.

Now the mechanism, which needs no theory. A man who holds land he will leave to his son has a reason to dredge a canal that will still be silting in forty years. A man holding a revocable claim on this year's revenue of a district he may be moved out of next season has no such reason, and the labour and money required are considerable. The Mamluk elite had, with great deliberation and for excellent reasons of its own, constructed a property regime in which nobody with resources had a long-term interest in any particular piece of Egypt.

The device that prevented a dynasty from capturing Egypt also removed the incentive to maintain it. The anti-heredity rule that runs through every module of this study — the refusal to own land, the rotating assignments, the caste re-bought each generation, the alignment that made every man defend the whole by defending his own claim — presented its bill here, in silted canals and waterlogged fields and a countryside falling out of the state's hands into the Bedouin's.

The scholarly caution belongs on the page rather than in a footnote. Borsch's thesis is a thesis, and the reviewing literature has pressed it on two points: that reliable demographic statistics for Mamluk Egypt do not exist, and that Michael Dols had earlier suggested the long post-plague downturn was a regional problem across the Middle East rather than something specific to Mamluk landholding. Both cautions are fair. But note that neither disturbs the mechanism; they bear on how much of the outcome it explains. The irrigation system did decay, the decay did require labour and investment that were not supplied, and the men who might have supplied them held claims rather than land. Whether that accounts for all of Egypt's failure to recover or a large part of it, it is a real cost, and it is the arrangement's.

The other column

Keep it separate and give it its weight.

Under this order Cairo became one of the great cities of the world, and much of what it built is still standing: the complex of Qalawun with its hospital and mausoleum, the vast mosque-madrasa of Sultan Hasan, the mosque of al-Mu'ayyad whose minarets rise from the towers of the gate where the last sultan was hanged. Colleges, hospices, hospitals, libraries and public fountains were endowed in perpetuity, on so great a scale that by the end close to half the cultivable land of the country was tied to them.

The scholarship those endowments paid for is not a footnote in Islamic intellectual history; it is a substantial part of the canon. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, al-Suyuti, al-Maqrizi, Ibn Taghribirdi, Ibn Iyas — all Cairenes, all working in institutions built by slave-soldiers. Scholars travelled from Anatolia and Persia to study there, and the men who shaped early Ottoman learning were formed in a Cairo college.

And there is the thing the order was founded on. The Mongols had destroyed Baghdad, killed the caliph, and taken Damascus. They were stopped in the Jezreel Valley by this army and never took Egypt. The pilgrimage road was reopened and guarded for two and a half centuries. Four schools of law were given equal standing in the courts. Whatever else is in the other column, Egypt was not sacked by anyone between 1250 and 1517.

An Egyptian who wept for the Turks

The last entry is not a number, and it is the evidence for the module's other theme — that when enough time passes, the violence that made an arrangement stops being visible, and what remains visible is simply the world.

Muhammad ibn Iyas was born in Cairo in 1447 or 1448. He belonged to the fourth generation of a Mamluk military family whose origins went back to the first quarter of the fourteenth century; his father was among the *awlad al-nas*, the sons of mamluks, and therefore not eligible for a military career, though he associated with emirs and powerful men of the state. Ibn Iyas held no official position, devoted himself to study and writing, and had considerable income from revenue assignments granted by the Mamluk state to its military personnel and their families. He was an eyewitness to the Ottoman invasion, and his chronicle is the only historical source written by a witness to the occupation of 1517 and the establishment of the new regime. Some of the

strongest and most affecting political poetry scattered through the chronicle was composed by the historian himself.

Consider the position of the man writing. His family had been excluded from the ruling caste for four generations, on the ground that they had committed the offence of being born free and Muslim in Egypt. He lived on the caste's revenue without any prospect of joining it. He watched it destroyed by another Turkish-speaking military power that offered, at least initially, terms.

And he wrote it as a catastrophe. The chronicle of 1517 is the lament of an Egyptian for the fall of a foreign slave dynasty that had never let his family in.

That is the forgetting, and it is worth being precise about what was forgotten, because the ordinary formulation is wrong. Nobody had forgotten that the Mamluks were bought foreigners; the chroniclers state it on every page, and Ibn Iyas of all people knew the caste rule intimately, since it had shaped his life. What had gone was not the knowledge. It was the *grievance*. Two hundred and sixty-seven years after a regiment murdered its sultan in a camp in the Delta, the arrangement that violence founded had become the shape of the world for the people living inside it — not a story they had been told, but the ordinary furniture of an Egyptian life, worth mourning when it went.

Naming the violent origin of an order is not debunking the belief that grew over it. The belief was real. It was also built.

Reading the accounting against the framework

Two contributions, and the first is the substantial one.

The metabolic note is not called only by conquest, and what determines whether the debt is ever repaid is the property regime. The framework has treated metabolic debt as something a conquest or revolution triggers by disrupting the coordination that holds a population above the land's natural carrying capacity. Egypt shows the trigger can be wholly exogenous — a disease out of Central Asia that no government could have stopped — while the *failure to recover* is entirely a matter of the order's own structure. England and Egypt took the same shock; England had recovered by 1500 and Egypt had not, and the difference the comparative scholarship identifies is landholding. So the question to put to any case is not only what disrupted the coordination but **whether anybody in the order had a durable, transmissible interest in restoring it.** Where the elite holds rotating, revocable, non-resident claims on revenue rather than heritable stakes in particular ground, nobody does — and the

note goes unpaid, not because the order is cruel but because its property regime supplies no one with a forty-year horizon.

That compounds the study's spine into its final form. Converting every position into a claim rather than a thing produced near-perfect alignment among men who hated each other, prevented any family from capturing Egypt, and gave the order two and a half centuries of coherence. It also meant that when the country needed rebuilding, the men with the resources to rebuild it had no reason to. **Claims-not-things bought alignment and cost maintenance**, and the bill arrived in a form no one at the time connected to the rule that caused it.

Second, the forgetting has a measurable tell, and it is sharper than the usual formulation. The test is not whether the ruled have forgotten that an order was founded in violence — they usually have not, and in this case the founding murders were written down in detail and read for centuries. The test is whether the origin still functions as a *grievance*. When a man from the class an order permanently excluded mourns that order's fall in his own verse, the arrangement has stopped being an imposition and become the world. Ibn Iyas is the clearest instance of that this collection has found, and he is the more valuable for having known exactly what the Mamluks were.

A note on sources. No exact quotation appears in this module. The demographic figure — that rural Egypt lost more than forty per cent of its population between 1347 and 1517 — is paraphrased from a study in *The Medieval Globe* working from the Mamluk chronicles and endorsing an estimate by Abu Ghazi; it is the most defensible number available and should still be read as an estimate, since the reviewing literature is unanimous that reliable demographic statistics for Mamluk Egypt do not exist. The geographical explanation of Egypt's vulnerability to plague comes from the same study. Stuart Borsch's *The Black Death in Egypt and England: A Comparative Study* is the authority for the irrigation argument and for the landholding thesis; his summary of the state of the agrarian system by the mid-fifteenth century, and his conclusion that Egypt's centralised urban landholding system could not adapt while England's localised rural system had fully recovered by 1500, are paraphrased from the book's own summary as quoted in a review and from the publisher's synopsis, not from a reading of the text, which should be done before this module is finalised. The account of the pre-plague absorption of surplus labour into dredging and dike-building, and of the post-plague sequence of waterlogging, productivity collapse, peasant retreat from markets and Bedouin occupation, is paraphrased from a review of Borsch in a medical history journal. The two cautions recorded in the text — the absence of demographic data and Michael Dols's suggestion in *The Black Death in the Middle East* (1977) that the long downturn was a regional rather than a specifically Egyptian problem — come from the same reviews and are given because the module's central argument depends on Borsch's thesis being right in mechanism even if contested in extent. Casualty and troop figures for

the battles are not used above because the reported ranges are too wide to be meaningful; the two thousand executed after Marj Dabiq and the roughly three thousand killed across Egypt in the week after 1 March 1811 are reported as the reference accounts give them and should be treated as orders of magnitude. The material on the anti-Coptic assaults, the crucifixions at Bab Zuwayla, the endowments, the scholars and the architecture rests on sources given in earlier parts of this study. The biographical material on Ibn Iyas — his birth in Cairo in 1447/48, his descent in the fourth generation of a Mamluk military family, his father's exclusion from a military career as one of the *awlad al-nas*, his lack of official position, his income from revenue assignments granted to military families, his status as the only eyewitness historian of the occupation of 1517, and the presence in his chronicle of political poetry of his own composition — follows the biographical entry in the Historians of the Ottoman Empire project and the standard reference accounts. The characterisation of his account of 1517 as a lament is well attested in outline in the secondary literature; specific passages have not been verified against an edition, and none is quoted here. Ibn Iyas's chronicle is the single most important unread source for this study and should be consulted in Muhammad Mustafa's edition or in translation before the study is finalised.

MODULE 12

WHAT THE NORMANS TOOK AND THE MAMLUKS REFUSED

Module 12 · Convergence and divergence — one problem, two answers, and the single decision that separates them; what this order shares with every other in the collection, what it shares with none, and the strongest case for the Mamluks stated at full strength and answered without flinching

A case study in the Patterns of Power series · Thomas J. Bryan with Claude/Anthropic · held as tested, not revealed

What was the same

Strip the strangeness away and the ordinary machinery is all there, working as it works everywhere.

Violence founded it — a regiment murdering its sultan in a camp on the Delta in 1250. A settlement followed, dividing the country's revenue among the armed, and every man's share was calibrated to what he owed in soldiers. A robe made the force cheap, so that a few thousand foreign cavalrymen held millions of people with almost no coercion aimed at them. Extraction ran through the settlement's channels and sorted by position. The information that mattered was managed, and men went to prison over it. The hierarchy defended itself without meaning to, because each man's position was a claim on the arrangement and could not survive it. Liberties existed and were residue, dropping out of quarrels among people with standing. No peasant ever changed anything. And when it ended, it ended the way the framework says orders end — hollowed from within, then finished by a rival hierarchy that arrived through a fracture in this one.

That is the collection's whole grammar, and Mamluk Egypt speaks it fluently. Everything below is a variation on those constants, not an exception to them.

What was different

Now the divergences, and there are enough of them to make this the strangest order in the corpus.

There was **no metropole**. The seam that splits by distance in every colonial case — what is done in the colony hidden from the public at home whose belief funds it — has no place to open here. The rulers lived in the country they ruled, spent its revenue in it, and answered to nobody abroad.

The **robe was borrowed whole rather than made**. Every other conquering elite in this collection either manufactured a legitimating story, redirected an existing authority, or destroyed one and inherited the vacancy. These men were converted as children into the religion of the country they would later rule, and arrived at power already inside the belief. No missionary effort, no counter-formation, no war on the native clergy — and a permanent, genuine constraint they could not renegotiate.

Formation was lavished on the ruled and concentrated on the rulers. Where the colonial pattern withholds education from a subject population because forming them would mean admitting them, this order built the finest educational infrastructure in the medieval Islamic world for a population it ruled and taught nothing to the mamluks' own free-born sons about how to become mamluks. The surveillance ran the same way: interrogation, inspection and punishment inside the barracks, and effectively none in the villages.

The elite refused heritable property to itself while permitting it to everyone else, and did so deliberately, for two and a half centuries.

The floor was an import, bought annually on a foreign market, carried in the ships of powers the sultanate was at war with.

The elite violence was continuous and structurally sterile. Sultans died by the dozen and not one faction in 267 years proposed changing what the sultanate was.

And **the caste outlived the state by nearly three centuries**, because it was its own purchaser and did not depend on the state it served.

One problem, two answers

The divergence that explains most of the others can be isolated by setting this conquest beside another, and the comparison is exact enough to function almost as an experiment.

In 1066 a foreign warrior elite conquered a rich agrarian kingdom with a working administration, a settled peasantry and a religion the conquerors shared. In 1250 a foreign warrior elite took power in a rich agrarian kingdom with a working administration, a settled peasantry and a religion the conquerors shared. Both faced the identical problem: how does a small alien military class hold a country, and how does its leader stop the men who hold it for him from replacing him?

William's answer was land. He confiscated the property of the English landowners and granted it to his lords in exchange for fealty and promises of military service. Some two hundred Norman nobles and a hundred bishops and monasteries received estates that had been divided among four thousand Anglo-Saxon landholders before 1066; other counts put the tenants-in-chief at around a thousand with some eight thousand sub-tenants beneath them, and the figures should be treated as a range. By 1086 only a small fraction of England's land remained in English hands. And these were *heritable* holdings — a man's fief passed to his son, and his son's son.

William saw the danger perfectly well and addressed it with a different dial: the lands allocated to a tenant-in-chief were dispersed across the country rather than concentrated in one area, which may have been done to make it harder for a baron to raise an army in a single locality. That is precisely the Mamluk anxiety — the great man with his own force — and William's answer was to scatter the estates while leaving them heritable.

The Mamluk answer was the opposite. Keep the assignments concentrated enough to fund a household, and abolish inheritance altogether.

Now the outcomes, which diverge exactly as the mechanism predicts.

The Normans were absorbed. Within a century and a half the ethnic distinction between conqueror and conquered had substantially dissolved; the languages fused; the descendants of the men at Hastings were English. Heredity did that, and it did it inevitably: a hereditary elite must marry, and the pool it marries into is local; its children are born in the country and raised by local women; its grandchildren have local kin. The conquering class becomes, over generations, part of the conquered population because there is nowhere else for it to come from.

And that hereditary baronage did something else. It became a body of men with permanent, transmissible, local interests, capable of combining against the Crown — which made English politics violent, produced repeated baronial wars, and produced the long series of extractions from a cornered monarchy through which, over centuries, the settlement eventually widened to admit people who had started outside it.

The Mamluks were never absorbed and the settlement never widened. Because the caste was replenished from the Caucasus rather than reproduced in Egypt, it stayed foreign for 267 years. Because entry required a childhood transaction in another country, no bargain could ever admit anybody. Because no family could accumulate a transmissible position, no baronage ever formed that could impose terms on the apex — and so, for all the ferocity of the factional wars, there is no Mamluk Magna Carta, and there could not have been. The men fighting had nothing durable to protect and therefore nothing durable to demand.

So: **heredity is the mechanism by which a conquering elite is absorbed into the population it conquered, and by which a settlement eventually widens.** It is also the mechanism by which lineages capture states, which is why the Mamluks abolished it. They were right about the danger. They did not see the second bill — that in refusing heredity they were refusing the only process by which they could ever have stopped being foreign, and the only process by which anyone else could ever have got in.

What the study changed

The framework accumulated a number of revisions across this case, and they cohere around a single thing rather than sitting as a list.

A conqueror inherits not only an administration but a **disarmament** — so a founding that looks cheap means an earlier order did the expensive work, and the absence of a founding massacre is not evidence of consent. Where a conquered order already held its wealth as a revocable claim, the settlement requires **no fiction at all**, and will be recorded in a survey rather than a charter. A **transit rent** is disciplined by rerouting rather than by revolt, so a ruler drawing revenue from goods passing through can look secure while the stream that funds him leaves. **Formation and surveillance go where the capture risk runs**, which is not necessarily downward; an order recruiting by an unearnable criterion will educate its subjects generously. An order **conceals what its legitimacy rests on, not what discredits it** — and where the robe is borrowed, the suppression apparatus belongs to the lender. A **legitimating office is worth what it is powerless**, and the men who need it most will destroy it if it acts. **Abolishing heredity distributes the succession problem** rather than solving it, because a loyalty that attaches to a person dies with him. **Coherence and adaptability are bought from the same account**, so a class constituted by a technique cannot adopt a technique that would dissolve the class. A rented floor

dissolves with its paymaster only where the paymaster is **external to it**. And the **metabolic note goes unpaid where nobody holds a durable, transmissible interest in the ground.**

Read down that list and one decision is underneath most of it. Converting every position from a thing into a claim produced the alignment, the discipline, the mobility, the immunity from dynastic capture — and the periodic dispossession, the inability to re-tool, the silted canals, and the permanent closure. **Claims-not-things is the Mamluk order in a phrase, and nearly every finding in this study is either its dividend or its bill.**

The strongest case for them

Now the counter-position, stated as its ablest defender would state it, because a study that only prosecutes is worth nothing.

Begin with the Mongols. In 1258 they destroyed Baghdad, the greatest city of the Islamic world, and killed the caliph. Nobody had beaten them anywhere. In 1260 they demanded Egypt, and this army fought them and won, and went on fighting them for sixty years, and Egypt was never taken. Whatever these men were, they were the thing standing in the road, and the civilisation behind them survived because they were there. That is not a talking point. It is the largest single fact about them.

Then consider how they ruled. For 267 years there was no forced conversion, no war on the native language, no attempt to remake the population's culture, no register of persons, no internal passport, no political police, no informer network aimed at the villages. The courts applied the population's own law, in four schools, staffed by its own scholars, and a subject could petition the sovereign against an emir. The rulers built colleges, hospitals, hospices and fountains on so great a scale that half the country's land ended up endowed to them, and the scholarship those endowments funded is a substantial part of the Islamic canon — produced by native Egyptians whom the regime never silenced and never needed to.

Consider who did the dying. The political violence of this order fell overwhelmingly on the rulers. It was sultans and emirs who were murdered, exiled and executed; the peasantry, uniquely among the cases in this collection, was not conscripted to fight the regime's wars, which were fought by a caste bought abroad at the state's expense. Set that beside almost any other order here, where the violence runs downward as a matter of course.

Consider where the money went. There was no metropole. Egyptian revenue was spent in Egypt, on buildings Egyptians used, in a city Egyptians lived in. This was not an extraction machine pumping wealth to a distant capital; it was a ruling class that consumed its income where it stood.

And consider the problem they were solving. Every hierarchy in history faces the same danger from the men one level down, and most answer it badly or not at all. The Mamluks saw it with unusual clarity and constructed a sophisticated, coherent, ruinously expensive answer, and it held for two and a half centuries — longer than most dynasties, longer than most republics.

Then consider the verdict of the ruled. When the order fell, an Egyptian scholar from the class it had permanently excluded — a man whose family had been barred from the caste for four generations for the offence of being born free and Muslim in Cairo — wrote its fall as a catastrophe, in his own verse. That is not the testimony of a subjugated people. It is grief.

The answer

All of it stands. None of it is exaggerated, and the study does not diminish any of it. But the case rests on three moves that do not survive inspection.

The light hand was not chosen. An order gets no moral credit for coercion it did not need. The Mamluks did not surveil the Egyptian population because a population in a valley with no exit, sharing its rulers' religion, presented no danger requiring surveillance — and the proof that this was calculation rather than restraint is that the same order built an apparatus of total control, with daily inspection, interrogation about a boy's movements and punishment for a lapse in prayer, and aimed it at its own barracks. They knew exactly how to watch people. They watched the people who might have hurt them. The generosity toward native scholarship has the same structure: education was safe to give because the caste line was made of purchase and foreign birth, which no education could cross, and the endowments that funded it were a device for smuggling inheritance past a rule the caste had imposed on itself. Real institutions came out of both. Neither was a gift.

The peasant is missing from the case as stated. Beneath the colleges and the hospitals stood a man the Mamluk sources call a serf and the peasant for ever, bound to his village until death along with his sons, unable to leave without his lord's permission, retrievable by force — and the lord obliged to retrieve him — and liable to be flogged, imprisoned or killed by the same armed man who took a fifth of his crop. He is the base

of the entire arrangement. He appears in the defence only as a beneficiary of things he had no part in choosing.

And the canals answer the achievement directly. The most serious charge against this order is not that it was violent, cruel or foreign. It is that its central device left no one with a reason to maintain the country. Plague came from outside and no medieval state could have stopped it. But England took the same blow and had recovered by 1500, and Egypt had not — and the difference the comparative scholarship identifies is landholding. A ruling class holding revocable claims on this year's revenue of districts it might be moved out of next season had no forty-year horizon, and the irrigation works that lifted Egypt's population above what the valley would carry unaided required exactly that. The dikes silted, the fields waterlogged, the peasants withdrew from the markets, and whole provinces passed out of the state's hands. The device that prevented a dynasty from capturing Egypt also prevented anybody from repairing it.

As for the achievement itself — grant it entirely, and then notice what it cost. Ayn Jalut is real and it is theirs. So is the closure. Two and a half centuries of vigorous factional bargaining, in which winners repeatedly bought support and losers were repeatedly conciliated, produced courts a man could use, endowments he could teach in, a sultan he could petition on a Monday, a vocabulary in which he could call a tax unlawful to the ruler's face — and not one Egyptian inside the room where anything was decided. An order that could be petitioned and never entered. That was not an oversight or a failure of generosity. It was the design working correctly, because the boundary had been drawn on an event in a stranger's childhood precisely so that nothing anyone did afterwards could cross it.

What to do with Ibn Iyas

Which leaves the hardest piece of evidence, and it should not be explained away.

Ibn Iyas knew what the Mamluks were. He wrote it down. He knew his own father had been shut out of the caste on a rule of pure arbitrary exclusion, and he lived on the revenue of that caste with no prospect of joining it. And he mourned.

The temptation is to call that false consciousness — a man weeping for his own chains. It is not, and this project's discipline forbids the move. That an origin was built does not make the belief a lie; it makes it a thing that was built and then became real. By 1517 the arrangement founded by a murder at Fariskur was not a story Egyptians had been told about themselves. It was the ordinary furniture of Egyptian life, and grief at

its destruction was the appropriate feeling of a man watching his world end. Ibn Iyas's tears are evidence of exactly what this collection says happens to orders that last: the violence stops being visible, and what remains visible is simply how things are.

But the tears do not settle the account, because the account was never a referendum. The people who could have testified to the other side of it were not writing chronicles. They were in the villages, where the canals were silting and the fields were going under water, and where the number that matters is that more than forty in every hundred of them were gone.

Both are true, and the study ends holding both without reconciling them. **The grief was real. So were the canals.**

A note on sources. No exact quotation appears in this module. The Norman material is drawn from general and reference accounts and has not been researched to the depth of the Mamluk material in this study, and the comparison should be checked against the specialist literature before it is relied on: the figures given — some two hundred Norman nobles and a hundred ecclesiastical institutions receiving estates previously divided among four thousand Anglo-Saxon landholders, against an alternative count of roughly a thousand tenants-in-chief and eight thousand sub-tenants, and the survival of only a small fraction of English landholding by 1086 — come from different popular and encyclopaedic accounts and do not fully agree, which is why they are given above as a range; F. M. Stenton on English feudalism, Hugh Thomas on ethnic hostility and assimilation between 1066 and about 1220, and Ann Williams on the English and the Conquest are the obvious authorities and should be read directly. The suggestion that William dispersed tenants-in-chief's manors to prevent a baron raising an army in one locality is given in a reference account as a possibility rather than a certainty and is reported as such above. The claim that the Norman and English populations had substantially fused within roughly a century and a half is the general position of the assimilation literature and is stated here in summary form; it is a process with contested dating and the module's argument does not depend on any particular date. All Mamluk material in this module rests on the sources set out in the preceding modules of this study, and the caveats recorded there — particularly on Borsch's landholding thesis, on the absence of reliable demographic data for Mamluk Egypt, on the unverified status of the investiture diploma and of Ibn Iyas's own text, and on the second-hand character of much of the Ayalon material — apply with equal force to the conclusions drawn here. The single most important task remaining for this study is to read Ibn Iyas's *Bada'i' al-zuhur* in Muhammad Mustafa's edition or in translation, and to verify the text of a Mamluk *taqlid*; the first is the eyewitness account on which this module's closing rests, and the second is the founding legal fiction of the whole order.